



LITERACY MATTERS

JUNE 2017

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



What You'll Find in this Issue:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ONA graduates, cont'd..... | 2 |
| Happy Birthday!..... | 2 |
| Tutor Spotlight..... | 2 |
| Resource Corner..... | 3 |
| Intern Update..... | 4 |

Happy summer!

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CONGRATULATIONS TO LITERACY NASSAU'S CLASS OF 2017!

(submitted by Digna Johnson)

Literacy Nassau's ONA students graduated on Thursday, May 18, at our annual Recognition Night at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset. It was an evening filled with excitement, self-achievement, and new beginnings. For many of our English language learners, this was a dream come true. Some started out knowing not a word of English, and can now confidently carry out a conversation, write an e-mail, apply for a job, or communicate with a doctor - so this is a well-deserved reward. Our graduates can now embark on their pursuit of the American dream. They have gained the skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, social skills, and cultural competencies. Our students will go on to find better employment, apply to higher educational programs, and more importantly they have the opportunity to thrive within their community.

This year, 36 graduates participated in the graduation ceremony. A certificate of program completion was presented to each graduate.

Cindy and I take pride in what we do as ONA teachers. We strategically prepare lessons that will result in growth and success for all of our students. It's very rewarding to see how far many of our students have come. We are proud to share some of our spotlight

students, as well as some of the highlights of our year, in the pictures and quotes below.

Finally, congratulations to the many tutors who are also responsible for getting these graduates to where they are today. I leave you with one of my favorite quotes, "Every moment is a new beginning." - Elie Wiesel
 Congratulations ONA 2017 Graduates!

"After taking English classes here, I'm inspired to teach more immigrants like me. Moreover I would also like to do religious discussions not only in my native language but also in English, so the message could be spread worldwide."
 - Jasbir Kaur, Hillside ONA class (pictured below)



"I appreciate to Literacy Nassau, Doris Rummel my first tutor SGI, David Leibenhaut SGI, and my actually great teacher Digna Johnson."
 - Mariah Brick, Hillside ONA class
(continued on page 2)

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

As I write this, I am thoroughly exhausted! It has been such a crazy season here at Literacy Nassau. Between Recognition Night preparations and coming to the end of my Orton Gillingham practicum for my Associate Level application, I feel like my life has become a cycle: tutor, work, sleep, repeat. I'll be submitting my application to the Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators on June 23rd and then I am off to the Cape for a well-deserved vacation!! It will be so refreshing to spend some quality time with my family and to relish in our favorite Cape Cod activities. The summer is a great time to cleanse your mind so you can refocus on upcoming priorities. 2017-18 is going to be a banner year for Literacy Nassau - it's our 50th anniversary! We have so many wonderful things to plan for and look forward to in the coming year, including the 20th anniversary of (un)SCRABBLE, the launch of our first ever capital campaign, and so much more.

But first, a nap...

☺ Karen



Welcome summer!
 Time for our four favorite summertime activities (we call them the "4 B's" of Cape Cod): the beach, biking, books, and baseball!





Pictured left, Mariah Brick, ONA graduate, Hillside Class. Pictured right, ONA students participate in a Know Your Rights Seminar from the US Department of Labor. Middle, left: pictures from ONA trip to Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. Middle, right: Jericho ONA game time! Bottom, right: End of the year celebration of food, friends, and community.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all our tutors born in June!

- Janet Bazuro ~ Judy Beckman ~ Stephen Bendernagel
- Teresa Benedetto ~ Susan Bevilacqua ~ Mel Breshin
- Bob Buttner ~ Margaret Cibulsky ~ Marilyn Clarke
- Marla Cohan ~ Nadine Connors ~ Carol Davan
- Betty Engel ~ Sheila Frank ~ Edward Garfinkel
- Daniel Goldschmidt ~ Coleen Graziose ~ Robert Greenberg
- John Guerin ~ Denise Hibbert ~ Maureen Hogan
- Jennifer Hopper ~ Valerie Ignatowitz ~ Kathleen Kelty
- Lisa Kornberg ~ Paulette Lalljee ~ Muriel Leonard
- Carolyn Meditz ~ Irene Meier ~ Maureen Miller-Calamo
- Lisa Monvignier ~ Edward Paley ~ Celeste Pomerantz
- Jennifer Power ~ Maxine Schmerzler ~ Kathryn St. Juste
- Monique Thomas ~ Matilda Tobin ~ Sandra Villatoro
- Eileen Watts

TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: MARJORIE FARRELL

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)



Marjorie has been with Literacy Nassau for 5 years. She's done spectacular work with many students and is currently working with Olivia Chu. Olivia has improved so much within the year that Marjorie and Olivia won Most Improved ELL Pair of the Year at Recognition Night. I'm happy to share her experience with Literacy Nassau and for everyone to get to know her.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself.

A: I've lived with my husband in Bellmore for almost 40 years, but as a child I migrated with my family from the city to Brooklyn to tree lined Queens. We have grown married children, *(cont'd on p.3)*

RESOURCE CORNER: SECRETS OF THE TRADE: WRITER'S WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

(submitted by Rebecca Figueras)

I am currently a graduate student getting my Master's in Special Education and Literacy. As long as we keep it a secret from Hofstra University, there are a few tricks of the trade that will benefit our students not only in comfort, but also in their abilities to participate in writing activities.

When you get into the groove and continuously meet with your students, you quickly learn that for some, the most difficult tasks to engage them in include writing assignments. Some of our students fear writing—especially without any form of directions or parameters to an assignment. You may have experienced this before and have seen your student's hesitation when it comes to writing.

One way to conquer this fear includes the use of a private writer's journal. Some students look at the blank book with trepidation and fear. However, if you start with model or a format for the student to look to for guidance, it will make the situation slightly more comfortable. You and your student are going to be the only ones writing in their journal and each student should have their own. As tutors, we must be willing to meet our students where they are currently and this will look different for a variety of students.

Writing tasks can be doubly difficult for our English Language Learners since this task is much easier for those who have the ability to at least speak English fluently (as their primary language). For students who have that ability, promote the use of bi-literacy skills. Whatever topic you are covering that day in your session, pen a letter to your student about it. Ask them about their lives and have the abstraction of language become more meaningful and real to our students.

Some of our students are unable to read English, while others have a background from their home countries. It is important to keep your messages short at first and allow students to translate the letter if needed as well as respond first in their native language as well as English. You will find that you will not need to go into detailed grammatical lessons or go and correct what they wrote, no matter how much you desire to do so. Your writing becomes a model for theirs. Many students will continue to follow whatever format you respond to them in and use your writing to guide their own. Some students will learn from how you write and others will ask questions about why you wrote something in particular manner. You will soon see the change of pace and comfort in your student's interaction with writing activities. Make sure to respond to each message weekly and focus on their strengths, rather than their errors.

Another suggestion is to have your English Language Learners write letters back to their families in their home countries, in both English and their native language. Use writing prompts to steer the topics around what they are learning in your tutoring sessions. This is a great way to double check your students' comprehension of the lessons you have taught them while also providing an opportunity for meaningful written work.

When utilized on a regular basis, activities like these will increase confidence and comfort while also teaching practical composition skills. Happy writing!

TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: MARJORIE FARRELL (CONT'D.)

(continued from p. 2)

a son and a daughter, and four super grandkids. I work in a large hospital complex, overseeing laboratory testing performed in critical care areas. My passions are physical fitness, plants, and reading, but most of all spending time with family.

Q: When did you start volunteering with Literacy Nassau?

A: I volunteered as a tester with the previous Literacy Nassau organization, and then five years ago rejoined with the new, reorganized and very professional leadership.

Q: Why did you choose to volunteer with Literacy Nassau?

A: I attended a volunteer fair at Farmingdale College, visiting each booth. Literacy Nassau resonated with me. I wanted a 1:1 situation, where I hoped to make a difference in someone's life.

Q: Explain your experience throughout these 5 years.

A: After our training, we anxiously awaited my student assignment. I read mine: a beginning male student from an area of the world unfavorably looked upon since 9/11. Oh my! But I saw Yazid for what he was, a wonderful, caring, earnest, motivated young man. When he moved out of state, I acquired a Greek student. With the help of his wife at the beginning, and a Greek dictionary, we persisted until a new job in the city required late hours. I was asked to take on another early learner, a lady from Hong Kong, and Olivia and I began our journey.

Q: Working with people from different cultural backgrounds, what have you learned from your students?

A: We are so much more alike than different. We all work hard, care about our families, and strive for a better life.

Q: What would advise a new tutor starting out with us?

A: Investigate all the resources, and then concentrate on what gets results for your student. Mix it up with outings and holiday activities to keep things interesting for you and the student.

Q: Tell us about your current student. How are things going?

A: Olivia has a full time job caring for 2 boys of a working couple. One child is emotionally and intellectually challenged, so Olivia has her hands full. She lives with her husband in Bellmore, and enjoys spending time with her extended family nearby. Workbooks, a magnetic letter board, online worksheets and library books form a solid basis for her learning. She has gained so much skill and confidence in our two years together.

Q: What motivates you to keep on tutoring with us?

A: Each student has enriched my life and broadened my understanding and empathy for what makes us each unique. They all have my admiration, and that motivates me to keep tutoring, hopefully expanding my responsibilities when I someday retire.



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INTERN UPDATE

(submitted by Kim Nau)

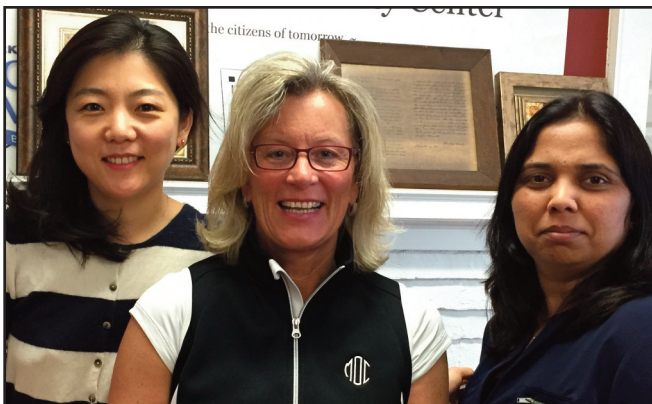
As you may know, thanks to support of the Guru Krupa Foundation, Literacy Nassau was able to create a competitive internship program for students who graduated from our ONA Advanced Level ESOL class. Christine Kipper, Shashi Sonika, and Liz Nam have had the opportunity to become paid interns while gaining valuable work experience in America.

As part of this grant, we are able to offer the interns educational workshops to prepare them for the workforce. Here is a breakdown of the workshops:

- Resume Building Workshop - taught them how to properly formulate a resume and cover letter, along with job leads to pursue
- Mock Interviews – allowed them to practice their interview skills with Literacy Nassau Board Members, who offered them valuable constructive feedback on their performance.
- Field Trip to the New York State Department of Labor One Stop Career Center in Hicksville – enabled them to learn valuable tips for the job search process, job resources, and offered personalized, free career counseling.

While on our field trip to the Hicksville One Stop Career Center, Liz expressed an interest in pursuing a career as a florist. The counselor helped her look in the NYS Job Bank for postings. Shortly after, Liz was offered an interview with a prominent local florist. We worked on her portfolio and I helped her practice for the interview by reviewing the proper pronunciation of flower names. Imagine the challenges an English Language Learner has with words like chrysanthemum and hyacinth. Her hard work paid off because Liz's experience and impressive interview skills got her the job! She is now working as a floral designer, fulfilling her American dream, and also fulfilling the goal of the internship program and Literacy Nassau's entire pipeline of services for ELLs.

These three ladies have demonstrated professionalism, motivation, and initiative and we are so thankful for their hard work. They have truly set the bar high for the next group of interns who will follow in their footsteps.



Pictured L-R, our Spring 2017 Interns: Liz Nam, Christine Kipper, and Shashi Sonika. Thank you to the Guru Krupa Foundation for funding this important program!