



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

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## STEPPING INSIDE THE ALE CLASSROOM

(by Helena Rhein, Program Coordinator)

Throughout the month of May, I had the pleasure of visiting various Adult Literacy Education (ALE) classes that we hold at libraries — and may I say, being in these classrooms reminded me of why I wanted to go into the field of ESL in the first place. In every classroom, there was a strong sense of community and warmth. It was clear that the teachers, have fostered a community of learners and created a space where students felt comfortable and safe to make mistakes and truly take their time to learn English.

While visiting, I observed as students studied vocabulary regarding topics such as household chores, forming the present progressive (e.g. "I am cooking dinner"), discussing past actions. Each teacher supported their students as they navigated the tricky rules of English grammar — and the best part is: no two teachers taught their class in the same way. Some teachers noticed that their students worked best when talking with their peers and, therefore, often prompted them to work in groups; other teachers had their students work independently but circled the room to give each student one-on-one attention. This highlights not only their sincerity and dedication to learn English, but their self-discipline to do so. There is no one way to teach a class and, like these teachers have demonstrated, a classroom is most successful when it adapts to the needs of its students.

## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi everyone,

Happy summer! I hope this note finds you well.

As you may know, we spend our summers in Cape Cod. This year, Haley turned 14, and the first thing she did on her birthday was to get her Massachusetts working papers so that she could get a summer job! I'm so excited to introduce you to the Brewster Book Store's newest employee. Haley is spending her days doing inventory, stocking books, offering recommendations to young adult readers and children, and manning the register. The best part? She's surrounded by books and book-lovers. Summer is a time to relax and rediscover your passion. An avid reader (who has dyslexia!), Haley is growing into a hardworking young lady. We are so proud of her.

Hope you all have a wonderful summer, and make sure to take time for the things that matter most to you!

A good ESL teacher also knows when to follow the book, when to supplement it, and when to pivot and ask students what specific lessons they would like to learn. The Friday before Mother's Day, I visited the Oceanside Library, where the teacher was showing a helpful YouTube video on the history of Mother's Day and the ways it is celebrated in the United States; then, he provided opportunities for cultural connection by asking students how they celebrate Mother's Day in their countries, and how they planned to spend Mother's Day. While visiting the Uniondale Library, I watched the teacher review pronunciation with her students. This lesson came about after one student specifically requested more pronunciation practice; in response, the teacher turned to FUNdation cards, which had depicted different letters and digraphs accompanied by a helpful visual. It was evident how appreciative students were of their teachers' willingness to listen to their needs and respond effectively.

ESL classrooms are spaces where students of all different backgrounds come together to meet a common goal. Watching the students collaborate with the teacher — and with each other — filled me with such pride. Although this school year has already come to a close, I look forward to watching our new students begin their English journey this September, and I'm proud to be part of an organization that not only encourages prospective language learners, but supports them on every step of the path!



Karen ☺

## AUTISM & NEURODIVERSITY ALL ABILITIES EXPO

(submitted by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)

I had the pleasure of presenting at Brentwood School District's Neurodiversity Fair. The Brentwood Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) organized a wonderful, inclusive event that was very well planned and well attended. The halls were decorated with balloons and raffle prize tables. Students were engaged with a sensory room with games and arts & crafts. There was also a face painter and students enjoyed showing off their painted faces.

The gym was filled with approximately 40 vendors from many different organizations offering information about their programs and services. I had the opportunity to meet many different students and families and to hand out more information about Literacy Nassau's programs. We had a lot of interest in our Orton-Gillingham Summer Intensive Program which offers elementary aged students the opportunity to build OG reading and spelling skills while engaging in fun summer arts & crafts, games, and relay races.

I also met several adults who were interested in joining our Basic Literacy tutoring program for adults reading below a 6th grade level to work on improving their reading and spelling skills with one of our volunteers. They were also interested in joining one of our Next Chapter Book Clubs which supports the social and literacy development of members with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Participating in a fair like this not only allows us to share what we do with families and potential new students, but it also allows us to network with other organizations. It is always interesting to learn more about other programs and to help us build on our list of referrals to better support our students. We are thankful to the Brentwood SEPTA.



**REMINDER**

**We do not  
have  
summer ESL  
classes.**

**Registration  
for the fall  
will begin  
the week of  
September  
7th.**

**Visit our  
website for  
dates and  
times.**

6TH ANNUAL

# Charlie Meaney's GOLF OUTING

BENEFITTING

## Literacy Nassau

EMPOWERING ADULTS. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

**SEPTEMBER 9, 2026**

**PELHAM BAY GOLF COURSE**  
870 Shore Road, Bronx, NY 10464

**\$220 PER GOLFER**

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**7:00 AM**  
Check-In  
and Breakfast

**8:00 AM**  
Modified Shot Gun Start  
Best Ball Format

**1:00 PM**  
Luncheon with  
Awards & Raffles  
*Open Bar*

Breakfast  
 Luncheon with Open Bar  
 18 Holes of Golf  
 Raffles & Prizes

**INCLUDES**

**BREAKFAST**

**18 HOLES  
OF GOLF**

**GOLF CART**

**LUNCHEON  
WITH OPEN BAR**

**RAFFLES  
& PRIZES**

**GOLF REGISTRATION & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**  
Melissa Golfo | 516-315-9062 | [mgolfo@literacynassau.org](mailto:mgolfo@literacynassau.org)

Don't miss this great event on **Wednesday, September 9** to benefit our organization in support of all our programs. This is our only fundraiser of the year as a nonprofit organization.

To learn more about it and to sign up please email:  
Melissa at [mgolfo@literacynassau.org](mailto:mgolfo@literacynassau.org)

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT

*(submitted by Helena, Rhein, Program Coordinator)*

In April, we held two volunteer appreciation events for those who work with our students. While reading is an essential skill that everyone should learn, it can be difficult for students who view it more as a chore rather than a pastime, or who are otherwise unmotivated. We asked tutors to share a brief moment that made them love reading. Was it a teacher? A certain book? A memory? We had a variety of answers. Some volunteers developed a love for reading very young. They remember looking over their moms' shoulders as they were read to as children; others did not find their love of reading until college. "It was a class I took on women writers," shared one volunteer. "We read authors like Amy Tan, Doris Lessing, and Toni Morrison. It hit my reset button and I once again started my love for reading."

We also asked volunteers to share some go-to strategies that they use with struggling readers. Tutors emphasized the importance of introducing students to the library. If readers are not familiar with the facility, they will not be comfortable talking to the librarians and staff and will not be able to use the resource to its full potential. Another highlighted suggestion was turning the readings or lessons into games. One tutor combines phonics with the game Uno, where students have to match by color or syllable type of the word. Other volunteers turned to Spotify. There is a broad selection of ESL pop song playlists on Spotify that you can use with students — songs that, not only are the students already familiar with, but the words are pronounced nice and clearly. You can give your students lyric sheets so they can read along!



You never know what's going to be a reader's catalyst — that one thing that makes everything makes sense, or even sparks a love for reading. Students need to be exposed to a variety of strategies to find what type of learning works for them. Maybe an activity that did not resonate with one student will be the activity that fuels another student's confidence. That's why it's important for tutors to share their experiences and exchange different ideas. Through community and collaboration, we can reach students at every level and match them with learning styles that work for them.



CELEBRATING  
**VOLUNTEERS**  
WE THANK YOU ALL!

## TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: STEVE UNTER

*(submitted by Steve Unter, ESL Teacher)*

My name is Steven Unter and I am a licensed New York State English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. I worked for the New York City Department of Education for over 30 years in Jamaica, Queens. I have also taught ESL to adults at Kingsborough Community College. Since September 2024, I have been teaching ESL to adults with Literacy Nassau.

I teach students representing several different cultures. The majority of my students come from China, India and Central America. I teach my students English and they teach me many things about their cultures as well. The diversity represented in the classes is a strength of our program.



Steve's Jericho class.

I enjoyed using new materials from Cambridge's Ventures Program this year. Our students used new books with colorful illustrations. Students could click on the QR code on different pages of the book and listen to the book being read by native English speakers. There is also an online component of the materials and a workbook as well. I also worked with very dedicated volunteer tutors in my classes. They worked with students in small groups to give extra help or more advanced work.

They say time flies when you are having fun! I enjoy working with my students very much. My tutors and I have seen them make very good progress in English. They came in September learning how to say and spell their names, addresses and phone numbers. And in April, National Poetry month, students have written acrostic poems! It's been a fun year!



Steve along with Mary (3rd from the left-volunteer tutor) and their students at the Freeport Memorial Library.

*We are so thankful to have Steve on our team. He started with us last year as we were just beginning to pilot the idea of having staff members teach larger ESL classes. As we transitioned to running all of our classes with staff members this year, it was so helpful to have Steve share his wisdom and experience with the rest of the team. He also helped to support a curriculum upgrade and shared resources and best practices with new staff.*

*We always enjoy getting to visit Steve's classes. Although he has three classes with 20-30 students per class, he always gets to know each student well and really has their best interests at heart. He is able to modify and supplement the curriculum to meet different levels and types of learners. He also works with volunteers in each of his locations and collaborates with them to provide extra support to students who need them. We look forward to our continued work with him.*



**LITERACY**  
N A S S A U

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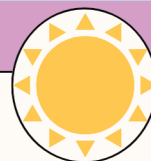
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## SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY  
8:00AM – 3:30PM

SATURDAY  
CLOSED

**THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED:  
August 3 – August 14.**

**WE WILL BE BACK ON AUGUST 17.**

