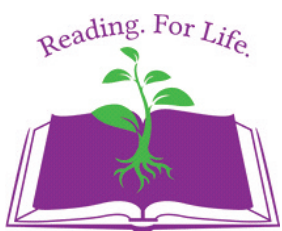




LITERACY MATTERS

MAY 2020



LITERACY
N A S S A U

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

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MOVING ONLINE

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

When I heard that we would have to transition to virtual teaching, like many other teachers, I had my fair share of concerns. I know many were worried about having access to the needed technology at home. This was not one of my worries. With a husband who is a computer tech/PC builder/technology enthusiast, I have plenty of tech in my home. What device would I use for my virtual sessions? Well, I had one gaming desktop (that he assembled himself), a laptop, and half a dozen tablets (of various brands and sizes of course) to choose from. I settled on the laptop because I thought it would be the most versatile for my new home office (AKA the dining room table) and strategically faced it against the back wall so the students couldn't see the amount of fish tank paraphernalia that litters the rest of the room. (Another of my husband's hobbies - we have 5 fish tanks holding at least 60 fish; I lost count some time last year.)

I also didn't have to worry about the quality of our internet service. We have 1000/1000 Mbps download and upload speed. My husband warned, "Make sure you call them so we're hosting the call and they get the benefit of our service."

So if I had the needed device and the best possible service, why would I be concerned? Because, unlike my husband, I HATE technology. I like reading real books, turning real pages, writing in cursive on real paper with a real pen. I like hands-on materials and games with pieces that I cut myself. I didn't want to figure out how to use a virtual whiteboard or share my screen or upload virtual games or videos. Besides, I already had my lessons planned for the week and none of the activities I had prepped would work virtually.

So did I get assistance from my personal computer tech? No! Well, in all fairness, he tried to explain everything to me, but there were a lot of numbers and mega-things and giga-somethings involved. I gave up on him and made my mother (who hates technology even more than I do) practice a Facetime lesson with me before I was ready to "perform" for my students. It went a lot like, "No, Ma, turn the iPad so I can see you, no now I see the fan, no now that's the floor, can you see your picture in the corner? That's what I see. I can't hear you; did you leave the room?"

Fortunately, my students are much more comfortable with technology and their first real sessions went much better than my practice session with my mother.
(continued on page 3)

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Well, it looks like we're in the thick of it now. Hopefully, you've all settled into a new routine. I know we have, for sure. It looks something like this: Every day, we all wake up around 7. The girls play in their rooms quietly (together) and Chris and I read the headlines until around 8. Then, we get up, shower, and give the kids breakfast. From 9am until noon, I homeschool the girls so Chris can do his own work and maybe get some exercise. At noon, we swap. I come in to the office (since it's about two miles from my house) and work until 6pm. When I arrive home, the kids have been bathed and fed, and we all play a board game together before their bedtime. Special days are more challenging, such as Easter and Haley's birthday, but we're managing.

I think we often forget how much security there is in having a predictable rhythm. I read something recently that said there are 4 things you need in order to feel okay: 1) Exercise for 30 minutes, 2) Eat something green, 3) Get outside, and 4) Develop a routine. And don't lose hope - things will return to normal soon.

Karen 😊



Homeschooling is a lot harder than I thought it would be. Above, my girls play with Play Doh that we made on the stove. Pinterest and parent support groups have been so helpful!





LIFE IN QUARANTINE

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

Life brings different seasons for everyone. There is time to laugh, a time to cry, a time to celebrate, a time to mourn, a time to build up, a time to plant and a time to pluck out. We're in a season that is a wake-up call for everyone to reflect on themselves, their values, and their priorities. Although life is on pause, we need to see the silver lining in all of this.

Being under quarantine is very difficult for many of us; we live in a society that puts a high value on hustling and bustling every day. There's nothing wrong with working hard; but it's also important that we pause for a moment. Now, many of us are being forced to stay still and wait. Patience is a difficult virtue for us to obtain, since we live in a culture of instant gratification. Personally, I love to travel to different parts of the world, because I get to see different perspectives on how people live and what they value. Life is a journey of learning and growing. This pandemic has challenged everyone in society. Some experiences vary from person to person. It's important to see it as a life lesson.

For me, it has been a challenging time at home. My husband is an essential worker and he works in one of the most infected communities on Long Island. He risks himself every day to make sure that we have a roof over our heads and food on the table. That makes me so grateful for everything that we have. I've also had many close friends who have passed away from this horrific disease and we mourn with them.

At home, I have an 8 month baby who is very demanding. My work life is also chaotic. I can be at my computer at 11pm in the

evening while my husband and baby are sleeping. I know many others are in the same boat as me. I thank my husband and family who have been supportive of the work I do. This is a vital time for us all to support each other in any way possible.

Despite practicing social distancing, sending a message to someone that you are thinking about them goes a long way.

This pandemic really speaks to the issues we are facing in our society. Low-income communities are the ones most infected. Many of these individuals come from countries that may have not been given the same opportunities that we have in the United States. Low literacy skills are just one of many issues individuals face. Being a first generation citizen, I know it boils down to one thing: survival. That's the mind set of many of our adult learners. I see it every day. I'm glad that we are around to help with a solution for our community.

Regardless of all the challenges, we have set up an online English language learning platform for our adult students, made possible thanks to our volunteers. The fact that we have tutors willing to go on this journey with us makes me appreciate the passionate individuals at our organization. There are many other large scale programs on Long Island, but we are a special bunch. I always get amazing feedback from our students, tutors, and staff. That's what makes Literacy Nassau stand out.

Stay safe everyone. We are here to support you in any way we can.



Above, Cindy's baby Lyla helps mom work.

CONFINEMENT

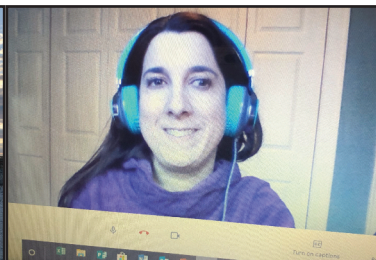
(submitted by Kim Nau)

When given the task to write about life in quarantine, it got me thinking... It has been a time of great reflection and the realization of what is truly important in life (family and health). Things that seemed essential before no longer seem nearly as significant.

I have enjoyed spending time with my husband, teenage daughter, and our two dogs. We have taken walks together and taken drives down to the beach at Point Lookout. I have done enough cleaning and organizing to ruin many DIY manicures. My daughter and I have baked dozens of brownies and cupcakes while binge watching Netflix. I have done video chats with high-school friends to keep in touch. It's the first time in years we have all been "together" because our schedules are no longer filled with activities and chores. I have remained obsessed with CNN in an effort to control what I can, while trying to keep my family safe.

I was thrilled when I was finally able to continue teaching my in-school Orton-Gillingham students from the West Babylon district during the first week of April. Now, I conduct 16 lesson plans and tutoring sessions a week from home and it has brought a refreshing sense of normalcy back for me. I have been researching effective online teaching resources and conducting virtual Zoom meetings to remain in contact with our amazing, volunteer Orton-Gillingham practitioners. I also received some great news this week which was that my Certified application to the Academy passed! I am now officially a Certified member of the prestigious Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators.

I do not know how much longer our nation will be at home but I am grateful that I get to be here with the ones that I love the most. As soon as the lock-down is lifted, I look forward to hugging my parents tight rather than blowing them a kiss from six feet away with tears in my eyes.



From L-R: A quiet scene at a beach at Point Lookout, Kim getting ready to conduct a Zoom tutoring session with one of her OG kids, and Kim's daughter Ava posing with their two dogs.



DISTANCE LEARNING

(submitted by Kelly Siry)

One of my favorite parts of working at Literacy Nassau is the face to face interaction I have with the our community. I enjoy getting to know students’ personal goals and supporting the wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time to working towards those goals. So when COVID-19 hit and we were told to work from home, I had to shift my whole way of thinking.

Learning English is often a way for our students to better their lives. During this trying time when people are losing their jobs, being directed to teach their own children at home and dealing with friends and family members becoming ill, I knew I couldn’t alienate our students when they needed me the most. Cindy and I came up with a plan for distance learning online. We reached out to some of our top volunteers and asked if they would be up for the challenge of helping us implement this program. I was overwhelmed by their responses. They too felt the importance of giving our students the continuity of learning English during this tumultuous time. I now refer to these volunteers as my “Western Region Super Stars.” They have stepped up in so many ways, from navigating technology issues to helping us adapt our curriculum to fit an online classroom. A huge thank you to Nupur Banerjee, Adrienne Carlton, David Leibenhaut, Karen McDonough, Jeffrey Miller and Neil Moran! Their dedication to helping our students learn English is unwavering.

We are currently enrolling new students by phone and reaching out to former students to offer them the opportunity to continue receiving instruction online, a process that has had its own challenges. The spring session of online ESL classes is set to start on April 20th. Cindy and I plan to continue supporting our students and volunteers through all of the bumps in the road ahead. But ultimately, it is the hard work and love from our volunteers and the desire of our students to better themselves that keeps us going!

MOVING ONLINE (CONT’D. FROM PG. 1)

The first week had a lot of trial and error, but we’re in a pretty good rhythm now. I’m still low tech - I e-mail materials to parents, they print them out, and my students read from real paper and write in cursive on real paper with real pencils. I hold up phonogram cards and they read them off the screen. I’ve modified games to include those we can play without sitting next to each other. If I really need them to have something I’ve cut out or written by hand, I either scan and e-mail it to them or send them a care package with game pieces in the mail. I also made a game board with velcro that I can rest on the back of my chair so they are able to see it through the webcam to play games. We’ve played Bingo, Memory, Uno, and tic-tac-toe games practicing our OG skills.

My students have been surprisingly flexible about the changes in our routine and we’ve been getting a lot accomplished virtually. Of course there are things they miss from our face to face sessions. Matthew said, "It's kind of cool to do online stuff, but it's harder to play games." Tyler stated, "I REALLY miss cooking." We used to do our cursive handwriting practice in various foods for a multi-sensory experience. Hunter was used to editing and adding pictures to his stories, then laminating them in the office and creating his own book. I brainstormed ways to keep this tradition going and found (thanks to another loong practice session with Mom) that you can minimize Facetime, open a shared Google Doc, and both type in it at the same time. You will lose the video feed, but audio will still work and you can see what the other person is typing in real time. Then I printed and laminated it, made the book, and mailed it to him - not quite the same as doing it himself, but the best we could do given the current circumstances.

Now, I begrudgingly admit that technology has enabled life to go on. Without virtual sessions with my students, what would I be doing stuck in the house all day? Facetime, Skype, and Zoom have allowed me to continue teaching, check in with tutors, stay in touch with colleagues all working from their home offices, complete online trainings that will be credited towards my OG practicum requirements, and have “Facetime Dinners” with my parents.

Outside of work hours, I am spending my time sleeping late, reading, doing some overdue housework, cooking/baking, and spending time with the 6oish fish, two ferrets, and the newest additions - two fancy hamsters. We went to Petco for ferret food and my husband felt sorry for them stuck in the store during a quarantine. They were 20% off, so naturally we needed both of them. Did you know hamsters are nocturnal? No? Neither did I...until this week.



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Warm Birthday Wishes to the Following Tutors!

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Literacy Nassau's **Dyslexia Dash**, a 5K walk-a-thon originally scheduled for May 2nd, will now be held in the fall (hopefully the first weekend of October).

(un)SCRABBLE, our annual fundraising gala, is also being moved to the fall, with the date to be determined.

Sadly, our annual **Recognition Night**, which honors our tutors, students, funders, and supporters, will be canceled this year.

We will keep you posted as dates are confirmed.

History repeats itself. Sharing this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Pandemic.

It was written in 1869 by Kathleen O'Mara:

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.

Reprinted during Spanish flu
Pandemic, 1919



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