



# LITERACY MATTERS

MARCH 2017

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



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## NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH GUARDIAN BUS CREATES PATHWAYS TO JOBS

(submitted by Digna Johnson)

Guardian Bus Company is a private school bus operator that runs buses throughout Nassau and Queens. Every day, you can see their fleet of buses gathered around schools to safely transport the children back and forth to their homes. what you may not realize, however, is that Guardian is one of a select few companies on Long Island that intentionally hires hard-working immigrants to deliver their service to the public.

At Literacy Nassau, we have been working with Guardian Bus since 2012, when we originally received our ONA grant. Part of the grant stipulated that we take our students on trips, so we hired Guardian Bus to provide safe transport to and from our hub sites (Hicksville, Uniondale, Freeport, Farmingdale, New Hyde Park, etc.) to the destination for each trip. We grew quite fond of our driver, Zbi, and requested him more and more for trips. Zbi is an immigrant who came to America in search of a better life for his family. We didn't realize that he is just one of so many wonderful Guardian Bus drivers who hail from other countries.

Guardian's management got to know us and our program over time as well. They were intrigued by our work with adults and have recently expressed an interest in hiring our advanced level English Language Learners. The starting salary for a bus driver is \$19.09 an

hour! Van drivers make around \$14.50 an hour and Bus Matrons earn approximately \$13.60 an hour. All positions are scheduled for a minimum of 30 hours per week and include health benefits and more. The best part is, we are teaming up with Guardian to provide all the training necessary to create a real pipeline for people interested in pursuing this as a career.

The first step for our students is to take a CDL class with me. These classes are being held once a week for 2 hours. I will teach the fundamentals of what is necessary to pass the CDL permit test. The culmination of the class will be our trip to the DMV where students will take the permit test. From there, Guardian Bus Company will hire individuals for paid training. In their classroom at their Oceanside location, new hires will come learn everything needed in order to be successful bus drivers, van drivers, and matrons. They will handle actual buses and commercial vans, learn how to read routes and use GPS systems, and practice what to do in case of an emergency. Once they pass the driving test and receive a Commercial Driver's License, they will be able to begin work!

We are so excited to have this unique opportunity to connect our students with a viable, good job that provides a real living wage. It is an honor to work with Guardian Bus on this special new endeavor. We look forward to keeping you posted!

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

It's so hard to believe that (un)Scrabble is right around the corner. It's even harder for me to understand why the event is filled with friends and corporate supporters, but rarely ever is it filled with tutors. I was talking to my husband about it the other day, and he surmised that it's a combination of two things: 1) You can only understand how much fun it is if you have actually experienced it, and, 2) It costs money to attend. So we tried to think of a way to make it more accessible so that more tutors would want to come out and try it! The first thing you should know is that (un)Scrabble is a team game. At your table, you play as a team against every other table in the room - so it helps to know people! It's also important to know that it's a fast paced cross between a crossword puzzle and traditional Scrabble. If you enjoy board games and great food, it's really worth a night out! So, I'd like to offer you a special:

**Every tutor who buys a ticket (for \$100) can bring a friend for free.**

The only caveat is you have to call me directly to sign up: (516) 867-3580, x11. Once you try it, you'll become hooked!

*Karen*



My girls are still a little bit too young to enjoy (un)Scrabble, but they sure do enjoy pretending to play the game!





## CONNECT WITH YOUR LITERACY SPECIALIST

*(submitted by Rebecca Figueras)*

One of the greatest effects of volunteering with Literacy Nassau is the deep bonds of friendship that form through working with students. As a tutor, you meet with your students at least 2 hours each week! As a Literacy Specialist, part of our job is finding the perfect student-tutor match that will result in our students excelling in their goals and flourishing within their environments. However, our jobs do not end there! We are here to assist in a multitude of ways in order to ensure you and your student find success. We are always available to answer questions, solve any issues and concerns, as well as provide materials, guidance, and a pathway to teaching when things seem a bit murky or overwhelming. Whether it is your first time meeting with a student or you are a long-time tutor unsure about the next step, reach out to us! There is always something to learn, and we learn as much from you as you do from us. No situation is too difficult to navigate and when we work together, we will always find a solution to any inquiry. We may seem like we are always on the run, but give us a call or make an appointment to come in during a convenient time. You can also attend one of our In Service Trainings, provided throughout the year, and connect with a Literacy Specialist as well as other tutors! We aspire to learn and grow every year. Let's continue to work together in our partnership to provide the best opportunities possible for our students.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Frank Annese  
 Joan Borruso  
 Claire Deroche  
 Nancy Doyle  
 Eleanor Feingold  
 Alan Freeman  
 Dilia Kamensky  
 Robert Lanzisera  
 Dena Lempert  
 Mindy Mangot  
 Joyce Mongitore  
 Deborah Monteko  
 Ronnie Packer  
 Aruna Paingankar  
 Ammu Paulose  
 Louis Pulido  
 Lauren Quinn  
 Janice Raven  
 Charlene Serenita  
 Sophia Shapiro  
 Mary Smith  
 Vickie V.Y. Stanco  
 Gladys Stuart  
 Brian Turchin  
 Peter Walsh  
 Kathleen Zuar

Marilyn Benson  
 Lyn Burros  
 Linda Diamond  
 Maura Feeney  
 Janet Fingeret  
 Charlotte Gabriele  
 Margaret Kemp  
 MaryLou Laurie  
 Maureen Lonergan  
 Harri Meyers



## THROUGH THE EYES OF A ROOKIE JUDGE

*(submitted by Candice Cantore)*

(Un)Scrabble is a fantastic game that we at here Literacy Nassau host once a year. The intense and exciting game is not only fun to play, it's even more fun to observe! For the first time last year I not only participated in the game, but I was a judge as well. Not being the best at math, the idea of adding up a lot of numbers fairly quickly made me a little nervous at first, but by the end of (un)Scrabble I actually improved my addition skills.

We began "training" to be judges about a month before the event last year. Our judges consisted of all of the Literacy Nassau staff, a board member (Irv Miljoner), some of our friends and family members, and even my boyfriend! We would all meet here at the office every Friday leading up to the big game. Karen provided lunch at every meeting, which was a huge bonus (because of her awesome taste in food!). At first, we learned about the game, the rules, and really just practicing scoring. Our next step was to actually play the game, and boy did we play. Let's just say that we are all way more competitive than we'd like to admit! We had a blast working together, getting to know each other, and really fine tuning our judging skills.

As the meetings progressed, we had finally reached our last judges meeting before the big game. By this point we were all very eager for the event to happen and ready to commence our judging duties. The morning of the event, we packed up the appropriate materials (boards, tiles, printers) and we were Chateau Briand bound. I had never been to an (un)Scrabble event before, and the set up and the venue were absolutely beautiful. After the cocktail hour, everyone was seated and the (un)Scrabbling began! Teams were rushing around their tables, talking to each other, trying different words to get the most points as fast as they could. As I was observing all of these games I couldn't help but have a giant smile on my face. What I really love about (un)scrabble is it takes the idea of a gala/fundraiser and turns it into so much more. Playing a game that not only has to do with what Literacy Nassau is all about, and having fun while supporting a fantastic cause was such an awesome thing to observe and help with and seeing all the excitement and laughs shared was awesome!

Each round went by so fast! We had four judges in charge of photographing the Scrabble boards. Running back and forth from the Judges room to the ballroom was one of my favorite parts, mainly because all of the staff members who were judging were also in a Fit-bit challenge to see who could get the most steps!! (Side note: I won!) Each of the rounds came and went very quickly. We did so much math in that little room! We had dictionaries and calculators everywhere and kept it extremely quiet - a stark contrast to the bustling ballroom!

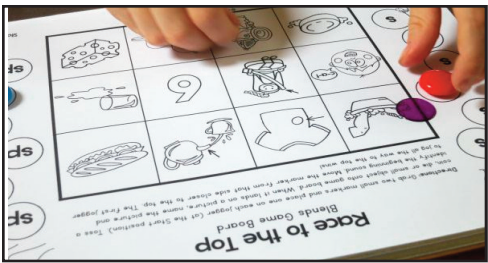
I invited my mom, sister, and aunt to come join the fun because of their love for scrabble, and they had an absolute blast! My mom and sister also won raffle prizes which I was so excited about because I had helped fundraise some of the raffle prizes. Everything went so smoothly and fast, and that was all thanks to our great teamwork, Karen's leadership, and the hard work of the volunteer judges that made it possible. I am very much looking forward to my second game of (un)Scrabble on April 6th. My experience not only improved my math skills and made my belly happy, but improved my views of teamwork, and enhanced my sense of how much work goes into putting together such a unique fundraiser. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer judge, please contact our Executive Director, Karen Micciche, at (516) 867-3580 x11. All we ask is that you be willing to commit to 4 Fridays of practice and that you're good at math!



## RESOURCE CORNER: ORTON GILLINGHAM FOR BLS!

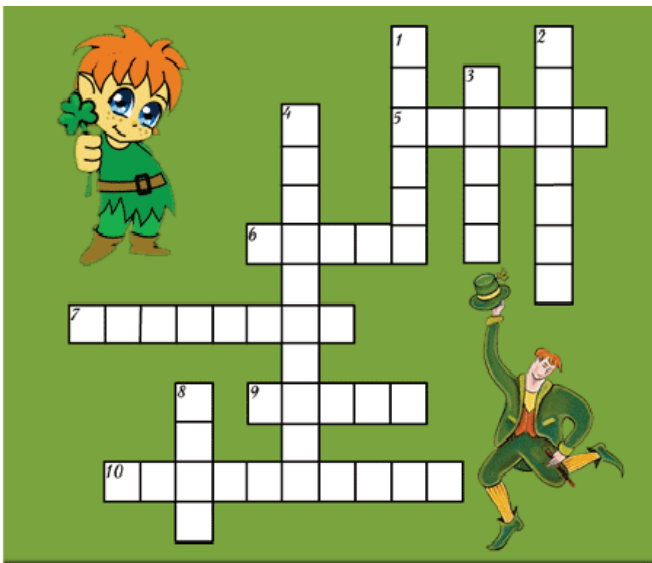
(submitted by Ocaria DiMango)

As the staff trains in Orton-Gillingham, we have been learning so many new strategies and approaches to reading instruction. Here are some important concepts and a fun resource to aide in the instruction of these new concepts. Blends and digraphs are important for your student to know after they have learned individual vowel and consonant sounds. A digraph is when two adjacent letters represent a single sound – there are consonant (sh,th) and vowel (ee, oo) digraphs. Blending is fusing the segmented sounds of two letters into one sound continuum (st, fl). For a list of consonants, vowels, digraphs and blends, check out: <https://tinyurl.com/z7ofdtd>. After teaching these concepts, here is a fun game you can use with your student: <https://tinyurl.com/gubqg3h>. This game will aide in your student's comprehension of what these concepts are so make sure to play only after you have taught the concept. And remember, have fun!



Race to the Top, pictured left, is a game that helps beginning readers practice working with blends. It can be accessed at the website above.

## FOR YOUR STUDENT: ST. PATTY'S DAY CROSSWORD



### *Cross*

5. St. Patrick's Day is believed to have driven these creatures out of Ireland.
6. This colour is associated with St. Patrick's Day.
7. A three-leaved plant associated with Paddy's Day.
9. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born here.
10. The largest Saint Patrick's Day parade in Britain is held here.

### *Down*

1. The St. Patrick's Day parade was first held here in 1761.
2. Saint Patrick's Day is the national holiday of this country.
3. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated every year on the 17th day of this month.
4. An Irish male fairy said to lead to a pot of gold if chased.
8. A musical instrument used for St. Patrick's Day decorations.

**Has your student been impacted by the recent ICE raids?  
Not sure where to turn?  
Call Umama at Literacy Nassau  
(516) 867-3580, ext. 17  
to schedule an appointment with an attorney for free or to find out when our next Know Your Rights: ICE Raids workshop will be held.  
Need immediate assistance?  
Call the Stella Justice Center at  
1-800-STELLA-J (1-800-783-5525).**

## EVERYONE HAS TO START SOMEWHERE

(submitted by Kim Nau)

Do you remember when you were searching for your first job? Did you wonder how you would ever get experience if no one would hire you? Imagine trying to get hired and being an immigrant with references across the world in your native country, but with no work experience here in America.

This January we welcomed our first set of interns thanks to the generosity of the Guru Krupa Foundation. They were carefully selected based on their performance and work ethic in our Office for New Americans (ONA) ESOL advanced level classes.

This internship offers an amazing opportunity for our students to gain valuable work experience in the United States to increase their marketability to future employers. It is a way for them to learn about American work culture and to understand what is expected in a professional office environment. It is also a chance for them to build on the various skills that they already have from their job experiences in their native countries. It enables them to jumpstart their career path as part of the American workforce.

Each intern receives a stipend and works in the role of Office Assistant. Every month they attend workshops like: resume building, a trip to the Hicksville One-Stop Career Center to learn about the professional services available, and Dress for Success along with mock interviews with the Literacy Nassau Board of Directors. The final month of their internship will culminate with a meal with the donor who made this all possible and he will share his story of immigrant success in America.

The goals of this internship are to: develop their professional skills, practice their English communication, increase their knowledge, and build confidence. Helen Hayes once said: "The expert in anything was once a beginner". Literacy Nassau is excited give our interns the opportunity to showcase their skills and prepare them for a successful future in the American workforce.



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## **TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: DONNA WHITE**

*(submitted by Sara Izquierdo)*

Donna met with her English Language Learner the night before her citizenship exam. While Anita was calm and confident, Donna was a little anxious! She wanted the hard work they had put in for the past few months to pay off. When Donna received a text message the following day that said, "Good Morning, I am Citizen US, Donna Thanks!" she knew it had.

Donna is a fairly new tutor; she went through the ELL Tutor Training Workshop in September, 2016. The first student she was matched with got cold feet and cancelled before their first meeting, but then Donna was matched with Anita. Anita's goal was to pass her citizenship exam, so their sessions were structured around that goal. I recently spoke to Donna about her experience with Literacy Nassau.

*How did you and Anita work toward her citizenship?*

Anita had a workbook that we used that included the 100 questions that could be asked. We did role playing to practice answering the questions and improving her conversational skills. Additionally, we worked on writing in complete sentences with a focus on grammar and punctuation. I was so happy for her when she passed her test!

*Before you started, how did you feel about working with an English Language Learner?*

I had read about Literacy Nassau in Newsday a long time ago. Last year, my youngest daughter went away to college. I found myself an empty-nester, and looking for a new challenge, and I remembered that article and decide to try tutoring an English Language Learner. I was extremely nervous during the training workshop! I don't have experience teaching or working with immigrants. However when I met Anita I was comfortable right away. She is so enthusiastic and determined. So far, so good!

*What do you do when you're not tutoring?*

I have been a nurse for 36 years. I've been in many different positions but right now I am in ambulatory surgery, which means I care for patients before and after surgery. Over the years I've seen more and more patients that do not speak English. We use an interpretation phone – where we can call a service that has interpreters for hundreds of languages, to communicate with patients. I see how important it is for people to learn English. I may start referring patients to Literacy Nassau! Outside of work, I like to stay healthy by participating in CrossFit, running, and I have recently started doing yoga. I have 3 grown daughters, one of whom is getting married this May.

Although she has only been tutoring for a short time, Donna has already experienced the thrill of success! Anita will soon be ready to move on to our intermediate class, and Donna is already looking forward to taking on a beginner, or maybe even two, when that time comes.