



# LITERACY MATTERS

APRIL 2023



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

## What You'll Find in this Issue:

Student Spotlight: Kei .....	2
Poetry Month .....	2
Happy Birthday .....	2
ELL Best Practices .....	3
Donation .....	4

## Our Staff Team

Karen Micciche, Executive Director  
 Anne-Marie Poliviou, Executive Assistant  
 Renae Katz, Bookkeeper  
 Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director  
 Cristina Morales, Program Assistant  
 Jennifer Perper, ENL Immersion Teacher  
 Carina Sanchez, ENL Immersion Teacher  
 Mikayla Grote, Receptionist  
 OG Tutors:  
 Melissa Sansobrino     Andi Clifford  
 Kaitlyn Beleckas        Jodie Schnalzer  
 Izabella Katz                Jane Hartigan  
 Mary Baumgarten        Helen Dawson  
 Christina Boughal        Stacey Popkin  
 Judy Fouad-Schoeppe    Richard Aizer

## Our Board of Directors

Susan Santoro Esq., (President)  
 Stefanie Singer (Vice-President), Novogradac  
 Iris Grover (Secretary), Reading teacher (ret.)  
 Sean Miller (Treasurer), TD Bank  
 Judith Beckman, Financial Solutions  
 Wendy Ehrlich, OppenheimerFunds (ret.)  
 Dorita Gibson, NYC Dep't. of Education (ret.)  
 Irv Miljoner, US Dep't. of Labor (ret.)

## AUTHORS: THEY'RE JUST LIKE YOU AND ME

(by Karen Micciche, Executive Director)

My debut novel, *The Book Proposal*, is finally launching! On May 16th, you'll be able to walk into a bookstore near you - or just hop online - and buy this book.

Lots of people have asked me all sorts of questions along the way, and I thought now might be an opportune time to answer some of them. We're all literacy nuts (if you weren't, you wouldn't be volunteering with us), and to most of us, authors are rock stars. I am honestly more starstruck meeting famous authors than I am in the rare instances when I've met famous singers or celebrities. I just think the ability to craft a story that other people can then read and enjoy is next-level cool.

So, here are some of the most common questions I've gotten in the past year:

### 1) What is your book about?

Well, it's a romantic comedy, so that's the first thing to note. I think people might be surprised that there are swear words and some suggestive content - all in good fun, of course, but very unlike the professional writing I do for Literacy Nassau! The story follows Gracie Landing, a down-on-her luck romance author who is really struggling to find her happily ever after. One night, she goes out with her girl friends and ends up drinking too much, only

to come home and send an e-mail to her unrequited high school crush. She doesn't even remember sending it, so you can imagine her surprise when he responds! The book chronicles all the mayhem that ensues after that. It's very heavy on the comedy. I really like to make people laugh.

### 2) Do your characters come from people you know in real life?

Sometimes, sort of, but also no. (How's that for an awful answer?) Gracie definitely is loosely based on me, for sure. A lot of the stories that make up her rich history are fictional spins on real things that have happened in my life. It's all part of the "write what you know" advice given in every writing workshop ever. But there's also so much creativity that goes into these characters, and so in many ways, Gracie and I are nothing alike. For one thing, I don't drink heavily. In fact, I'm such a lightweight that if I have one drink, I get all giggly and will eventually just fall asleep. There's an ancillary character in the book named Mrs. A, who is 100% based on someone I used to know in real life. When I was a kid, I'd hang out at my best friend's house - her mother was forever trying to feed me, and I'm a really picky eater. She would come at me

(continued on next page)

## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

This month, I'm so excited to invite you all to the launch party for my debut novel! The event will be held on Wed., May 17th at the Brokerage Comedy Club on Merrick Road in Bellmore at 7pm - and the coolest part is, I'm hosting it as a fundraiser for my beloved Literacy Nassau! Tickets are only \$25 and include an autographed copy of my book, *The Book Proposal*. I'll be doing a reading from the book and then the extremely funny and talented comedian, Liz Miele, will do a full comedy set! We'll have raffles and prizes, too. There are limited seats available so please sign up soon! You can register on my website at [www.kjmicciche.net/launchparty](http://www.kjmicciche.net/launchparty) - I hope to see you there!

*Karen* 😊

Get lit at  
**KJ MICCICHE'S BOOK LAUNCH PARTY!**  
 5-17-23

The Brokerage Comedy Club  
 Doors: 5:30pm/Show: 7pm  
 \$25/ticket plus 2 item minimum per person  
 All proceeds benefit Literacy Nassau!

~ Advance purchase only ~  
 For tickets, visit [kjmicciche.net/launchparty](http://kjmicciche.net/launchparty)

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: KEI

(submitted by Kate Quijano, Program Director)

Kei is one of our newer students who has already volunteered herself to assist us with registrations and is eager to improve her skills. We are happy to have her!



**1. Where were you born?**

Tokyo, Japan

**2. When did you come to the United States?**

November, 2020

**3. Tell us a little about your family.**

I live in the U.S. with my husband. I got a cute puppy last year, which is the most significant event since I came here. Since then, we became a family of three :)

**4. How did you hear about Literacy Nassau and how long have you taken classes with us?**

I heard it from my friend. I've been taking the class for 1 year now.

**5. Describe some of your experiences learning English.**

I tend to use Japanese in a daily life even in the U.S., so I try to make opportunities to listen and speak English as much as I can. Watching Youtube or Netflix and talking with my American friends are my favorite ways to learn English.

**6. What are your goals for the future?**

I'd like to enjoy watching movies without English subtitle for the future.

**7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?**

I'm so glad to take this ESL class. I feel it helps me a lot. Thank you for offering such a great opportunity!



### Warm Birthday Wishes to our Tutors!

Kami-Leigh Agard – Mary Alibrandi – Zeba Ansari  
 Marty Baicker – Nancy Benchimol – Nancy Bob – Judy Caputo  
 Adrienne Carlton – Jennifer Cestaro – Kathleen Coleman  
 Eileen D'Antonio – Margaret Dudley – Lisa Evans – Wendy Fast  
 Anita Faulding – Madalyn Fernbach – Barbara Fritz  
 Jennifer Gabriele – Mary Greco – Kelsey Greene  
 Florence Harff – Michael Hauser – Kathleen Jeacoma  
 Dolores Joseph – Keon Karimababy – Lorri Klonsky  
 Audrey Korman – Carmelinda Kurtzberg – Jean Lesser  
 Carol Markman – Susan Mazur – India McClain  
 Ruth Mulvaney – Antonia Obara – Carol Padovani  
 Jean Pascale – Maureen Peraza – Amy Perlmutter  
 Terese Pizza – Jane Quinton – Susan Rosenberg  
 Carol Schrafel – Vasu Shah – Linda Shine – Ann Silverberg  
 Margaret Tighe – Debbie Uckele – Virginia Walsh – Fran Weiss  
 Joan Whiteside – Jessica Zamora

## AUTHORS: THEY'RE JUST LIKE YOU & ME (CONT'D)

with all these foods that were cooked with so much love, but always at the most inopportune times! A lovely woman, truly. She's probably my favorite character in the book, to be honest.

**3) How did you learn to write like this?**

I read a lot. Always have. In commercial genre fiction, if you really dissect a story, you'll see that all of them have similar bones. For example, we've all heard the saying, "Boy meets girl, boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back." That's rom-com in a nutshell. The creative part is in the *how*. Also, I went back to school for my MFA in 2019. Being an author has always been my dream job, and I had this incredible opportunity to go to graduate school as a prerequisite for becoming a Fellow with the Orton-Gillingham Academy. You have to have a Master's, and it can be in anything, and I didn't have one. So if that wasn't the stars aligning, I don't know what is.

**4) Who else is involved in turning a story into a real book?**

Oh my gosh, so many people! First and probably most important is my agent. If you want to write commercial fiction for the traditional market, you need to have an agent. Agents are the gatekeepers of the publishing industry, and mine is a gem. Her name is Elizabeth Copps. I began pitching to her in 2020, at the start of COVID, a different novel that was more classic women's fiction. We got all the way to the point where she almost signed me, but couldn't, which was devastating. It turned out my story was too similar to a manuscript that had "just been written" by a client of the agency she was working at back then. Turns out, that client was Kristan Higgins, a NYT Bestselling author with 23 novels to her name.



I've become friends with some really incredible people as a result of this journey. Pictured above, NYT Bestselling author Kristan Higgins and I pose with our books!

What are the chances? Anyway, Elizabeth finally signed me for this book 18 months later. As my agent, her job is to sell the rights to my work. So she put the book out on submission, and brokered my deal with Sourcebooks (my publisher). She also hooked me up with a film agent, who is working on selling my film rights. At Sourcebooks, I have one main editor, Deb Werksman. It's her job to walk me through developmental edits, which are any major changes that we decide to make to the storyline. I also got a sensitivity reader, a copyeditor, and a cover designer to work on this book through my publisher. Last but not least, there's my publicist, whose job it is to submit the book to all the trade reviewers (like Publishers Weekly) and to help with my marketing efforts.

**5) What's next for you?**

Well, my current deal with Sourcebooks is for 3 books - so I've still got 2 left! I've drafted the second one and am working on the third. And I plan to stay here at Literacy Nassau at least until both of my girls graduate high school. (Julie's in third grade, so fear not, we have plenty of time!) People are often surprised to hear that most authors have day jobs - you don't make much on a writer's salary unless you're wildly successful. It's a funny business; you can be working for years and then become an "overnight success." Happens all the time!

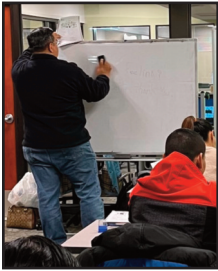
## ELL BEST PRACTICES

(submitted by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)

When I train new volunteers, I always say that Literacy Nassau exists for students who would not be well-served in a traditional classroom setting. We keep our groups small and individualize our approach to help the neediest students. This means our tutors get to know their students and their personal goals and work to meet their most immediate language and community needs.

It has been a pleasure to visit some of our ELL classes as part of our case management work. I would like to share some of the great things Cristina and I have seen happening in our classes that show Literacy Nassau's best practices for adult ELL instruction.

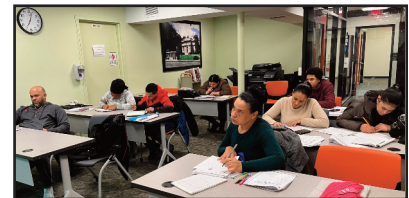
- In Juan's level 1 class, he saves a few minutes at the end of each class for students to share about an interaction they had during the week where they tried to use English or to tell him some words or phrases they have had trouble pronouncing. Everyone in the



group practices and role plays these interactions to help provide real-world support that students can implement immediately in their daily lives. For example, one student works as a home health aide, and practices questions she wants to ask her clients, such as Have you eaten lunch yet? Do you need help getting dressed? Would you like me to fix your hair? Another student shared that when he was grocery shopping, someone asked him where items were located. He wanted to know how to politely explain that he didn't work there. Another student wanted to practice how to request assistance in a store. Still another needed help pronouncing weather terms and everyday greetings. Juan's students are very focused on their speaking skills. They only speak Spanish at home and at work, so they appreciate the chance to practice English in class and to receive pronunciation corrections so that

they feel more confident speaking to others during their daily interactions in their community.

- In Linda and Marty's level 2 class, tutors text any missing students to see if they are running late or if they will be absent. This direct line of communication with students helps to boost attendance and allows students to ask any questions they may have of their tutors. They also utilize the SmartBoard at the library to show short video clips related to their lessons.



- In Sid's level 1&2 class, a student had to bring her child with her to class one day. Sid welcomed this young addition to his class, entertained the child, and allowed him to participate in the class.

- In Adrienne's level 2 class, students are greeted individually and receive a check-in on how their week was and a follow-up on previous goals. For example, one student never had an email address before attending class. Adrienne helped her to get an email address and now practices sending and receiving messages with her to help build her confidence with this task. Another student recently had a new baby and she checked in to see how the family was doing and empathized with their lack of sleep. The student shared that he was unable to complete his homework and Adrienne supported him in working on it in class and answered any questions he had about it. These check-ins help to build relationships with students and keep them coming back to class. They also give students practice with simple conversations.



- In Melva's level 1 class, they were discussing plans for an upcoming field trip. Melva likes to take her students on short field trips together to different areas of interest in the local community.

Students are given the opportunity to practice their English skills in real life situations with the support of their tutor to guide them.

- In Pamela's level 2 class, she does individual check-ins with students as they enter class. For example, a student had missed the previous session due to illness and she followed up to ask after his health. This helps to build a relationship and caring in the class and also allows students to practice these simple everyday interactions in English.



Launched by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month is a special occasion that celebrates poets' integral role in our culture and that poetry matters. To learn more about how you can participate in poetry month go to:

<https://poets.org/national-poetry-month>

- In Mimi's level 1 class, students each received a handful of magnetic letters, then the class worked to say the alphabet in order. The student who had that letter held it up, said the letter, the sound, and a word that starts with that letter. Instruction is also planned based on student interests. In one class, a student spoke about the Komodo dragon. So in the next class, Mimi had a reading assignment for them about the Komodo dragon, with photos of vocabulary words to support students in reading it. Each student had a turn to read the whole passage aloud and receive support and pronunciation feedback. Then they worked on a yes/no answer sheet about what they read. Most students worked independently on this task, while Mimi sat next to one student who needed more support in reading and worked with her 1:1 to finish the sheet. What a great example of differentiated instruction, enabling the whole group to find success!





**LITERACY**  
N A S S A U

1 Ivy Lane, Wantagh, NY 11793  
(516) 867-3580 ~ [www.literacynassau.org](http://www.literacynassau.org)

NON PROFIT RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**P A I D**  
Wantagh, NY  
11793  
Permit No. 29

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

APRIL 16 - 22

**VOLUNTEER**  
APPRECIATION WEEK

*We are thankful for the dedication you give to your students and our programs!*

**Wondering how you can donate to Literacy Nassau?**

Thank you for your AmazonSmile contributions. They are no longer running this program. You may continue to make donations to us directly via this link [www.literacynassau.org/donate](http://www.literacynassau.org/donate) or scan the QR code.

**DONATE**

Instagram: @literacynassau  
Facebook: Literacy.Nassau  
Twitter: @LiteracyNassau