



English Express

Winter 2020

You can't change the world, but you can change someone's world.

Since joining Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County as a literacy tutor, I've had many unique and rewarding experiences.

Previously, as a literacy volunteer in North Florida, I worked with a young woman from Colombia who was proficient in reading and writing English, but her heavy accent was a hindrance to being understood. Sofia was a wonderful, self-driven student. We both knew she had reached goal when she realized her accent was no longer a problem and she no longer avoided talking on the telephone. Thrilled, her new, improved communication skills enabled substantial independence and afforded considerable value to her personal life. I had two other students, one from Mali (Timbuktu, would you believe!) and the other from Morocco. They both spoke English, French and Arabic and were literate in none. We started with the Latin alphabet, vowels and consonants, and learning to read left to right. By the time I left North Florida, they were both English literate at a very basic level, and the young man from Morocco was reading bedtime stories to his little girl.

My experiences here have been as different as my students. My first student here is a young wife and mother from Cuba. She had been in the US more than five years, most of them in Miami where it's very easy to speak only Spanish to navigate the Hispanic world. Her children started school quite young and effortlessly picked up English. Her new husband had been in the US since the age of twelve, and was also

a fluent speaker. Even after the family moved to North Port, Ali did not speak English. I knew the major problem was lack of self-confidence. The family, in yielding to her reticence to speak English, communicated with her only in Spanish. We worked on improving self-confidence, reading aloud so she could hear her "English" voice. And I convinced the family to speak only English at home at least one hour a day. A year later, Ali took (and passed) her US Citizenship test in English and is now focused on studying for a nursing degree.

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Tutor Helen Russette and Student Ali Ricardo

Literacy Changes Lives!

President's Corner

As the weeks ahead move toward Spring, Easter and Mother's Day, our thoughts turn with gratitude to another strong year for Literacy Volunteers, and especially to our nearly 200 tutors providing essential English skills for about 350 adults.

On March 12 at 5:30 PM, Literacy Volunteers welcomes NY Times best-selling author David Baldacci to the Plantation Golf and Country Club for a fundraiser evening. At press time, a few tickets remain. Delicious hors' oeuvres are included in the \$100 ticket price, and there will be a cash bar. Go to our website, www.literacychangeslives.org/events or call 941-861-1352 to purchase tickets. \$75 of the ticket price is a tax-deductible donation to Literacy Volunteers. Hope to see you there.



Jim Patterson

A thank you luncheon for our tutors will be held on Monday, April 27, in conjunction with a brief annual meeting at the William H. Jervy Jr. Venice Library. Please mark your calendar.

As many of you will leave for cooler climates for this summer season, have you thought about maintaining your tutoring relationships using video conferencing options such as Facetime, Skype or similar software options? If you would like more information on how easily it can happen, call Kim Pike at the Start Now office.

Again, thank you to our volunteers and friends that make Literacy Volunteers possible for our adult learners.

Grant News

A critical source of funding for Literacy Volunteers comes from grants. Our grants committee has been busy this winter! Grant writer Claudia Daniels, with the help of various board members, has submitted a number of requests, and we are pleased to report some early successes.

Thank you to the Heron Creek Community Foundation for funds to purchase resource materials for our office in the North Port Library. Tutors can borrow workbooks, texts and other items to use with their students. Check with Karen Bridegam, North Port Coordinator, about titles that might be helpful to you.

In March, we will receive a check from Women's Sertoma of Venice. These funds will help pay for LitStart manuals, the basic text for LVSSC tutor training.

Save these dates!

Thu 3/12 5:30 pm	An Evening with David Baldacci	Plantation Golf & Country Club
To be announced	Annual Card & Game Party	To be announced
Sat 4/4 8:30 am	United Way Community Walk	Florida State College Campus
Tue 4/28-29 12:00 to 12:00	2020 Giving Challenge	Online Fundraising Event

14th Annual Literacy Volunteers Card & Game Party



Unfortunately, Jacaranda Trace will not be able to host our Card & Game Party this year. We're looking for another location, and will email you when we're able to announce the date and location of this fun event.

The Annual Card and Game Party has been a popular fundraiser for Literacy Volunteers since 2007. The total raised at those thirteen parties is \$33,600.

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I “discovered” my second student, a young woman from Ukraine, working the cash register at the front of her father’s shop. Recognizing she was struggling with English, I asked if she knew about LVSSC’s program. Yes, in fact, she had been in the program until, due to family health issues, her tutor could no longer volunteer. And, yes, she was interested in resuming efforts to improve her English. This is another very bright student who was self-conscious of her accent. As with Sofia, my student from Colombia, I explained that some accent is not a problem. In fact, most people think it’s quite charming, as long as they understand the speaker. We worked together, Americanizing her, improving her English, and helping her register for studies at

State College of Florida. As support, I accompanied her to her first few meetings with Administrators at the college. As her confidence grew, I was no longer “required,” and she is now attending classes four nights a week while continuing to help at the family’s store. Meanwhile, I inherited her younger, more reserved sister as a student. Being the youngest in the family and also very shy, she gives me challenges with still another set of issues. We began with discussions on body language, a gateway to better communications. And we continue to work on improved English, pronunciation and grammar. Hopefully, we may have another family member attending college in the near future.

- Helen Russette, LVSSC ESL Tutor

Adult Literacy Fact

Literacy Volunteers of America was founded in 1962 by Ruth Colvin in Syracuse NY.

Literacy Volunteers at Fox Lea Farm in Venice

As we build our arsenal of fund raisers, we had our first experience as Charity Partners at a horse show on Friday, February 7. The event – Jumping Under the Stars. The venue – Fox Lea Farm in Venice. A few of us had been to similar events at the farm, but most board members and staff were new to this type of sporting event. That is what made it such a special time. There were 16 volunteers from the Literacy bunch, spread out over many acres, parking cars, collecting admissions, selling raffle and 50/50 tickets and running golf cart taxi service for the attendees. Jim, Joe, Penny, Sandy, Nancy, Paddy, David, Mary, Judith, Kim and Peter all pitched in along with some spouses, partners, and friends – Holly, Jennifer, David, Ed and Loren.

The night was beautiful, but maybe the coldest and windiest for this Florida winter. The horses and riders provided a great show. A friend of LVSSC, John Leroux sang the national anthem and there was music, good food and drink.



Jumping Under the Stars

We didn't make as much money as we had hoped because of the weather. But all agreed that it was a great experience and a special team building occasion for a hard-working Board. We are thankful to Fox Lea farm for inviting us to participate by performing tasks that came with sharing the profits.

New LVSSC Foundation Opens a Path to Financial Stability



As many of you know and understand, LVSSC has operated for almost 40 years on a limited budget supported mostly by contributions and grants. Last year, we established the Foundation of LVSSC which allows us to accumulate funds that will grow and provide future income for Literacy Volunteers.

In our first year, we received \$25,000 to form the initial investment. This included generous

donations from our Past President, Jan Gallas, and three current board members. You and your friends or family can “BE THE ONE” to support Literacy Volunteers by including a gift to the Foundation of LVSSC in your trust and estate plans and leave future generations a proud legacy of support for the invaluable work of Changing Lives Through Literacy. Contact Joe Pokorney, Foundation President, for more information at 941-544-7272.

Learn How to Tutor from Home Using Video Chat on Your Computer

Many LVSSC tutors are snowbirds, a fact of life in Florida. Sometimes we can provide the student with a substitute tutor during the summer, but many times we cannot. To provide continuity for the student, we have been providing **Video Chat** classes so that the tutors can learn how to use this valuable computer tool and continue teaching during the summer months when they have “Gone North.” Many of the students are already using the various video applications to keep in contact with their families.

Learn how to tutor from home! We will demonstrate how to download and log in to Skype and how to create lesson plans for Skype tutoring. The next Video Chat class will be on March 27, and another class is scheduled for April 29. Both classes will be from 10:30 to 1:00 in the Start Now! Office and Computer Lab in the North Port Family Service Center, 6919 Outreach Way, North Port.

To register, please contact:

Karen at NP Library: north.port.literacy@gmail.com, (941) 861-1320

Peter at Venice Library: venice.literacy@gmail.com, (941) 861-1352

Kim at LVSSC Start Now! Office: start.now.north.port@gmail.com, (941) 429-3717



Video Chat classes are held in the same location as this Computer Lab 101 class.

Student Milestones

To date, our reports of student accomplishments have been mostly anecdotal. In the digital world, this is an inadequate way to measure success. The first version of our quantitative assessment tool is set to be piloted in two classes. These classes, which include several students, are divided by comprehension level and meet a few times each week. They will provide a perfect testbed. This version, after being updated based on feedback, will be rolled out to all tutors in the near future. At the same time, we will test a commercial student assessment application. We will report again in the Fall issue on the progress of the conversion of our assessments. ■

The Buddy System

The Board of Literacy Volunteers has started a new initiative to make certain that every new tutor receives as much support as possible. To do that we must be certain that the new tutor is paired with a compatible student and has the best resource material available. Recently, we instituted the Buddy System. The Buddy System encourages new tutors to form groups that meet from time to time to discuss the new tutoring experience. We try to include an experienced teacher in each group who can

add extra value to the meetings. This trial is very new, but we have already received positive feedback from new tutors.

In the near future, we will enhance the Buddy System by pairing new tutors with Board members who can also provide guidance regarding procedures and additional resources. This along with the many tutor workshops we provide will assist the organization's effort to retain and empower our valuable tutors.



The January class is pictured working in their Buddy Groups at the Venice Library.

Tutor Training for New Volunteers - Please tell your friends!

Tuesdays, March 11 and 18: 2-day tutor training at **Venice Public Library**

Thursdays, May 14 and 21: 2-day tutor training at **Venice Public Library**

Mondays, June 15 and 22: 2-day tutor training at **Venice Public Library**

Reserve for Venice sessions and 1-hour Orientation with Peter Norrman at venice.literacy@gmail.com or 941-861-1352.

Mondays, April 6 and 13: 2-day tutor training at **Shannon Staub Library, North Port**

Reserve for Shannon Staub sessions and 1-hour Orientation with Karen Bridegam at north.port.literacy@gmail.com or 941-861-1320.

Note: The 1-hour Orientation is a prerequisite for tutor training.

Welcome to New Tutors!

North Port

Lavonne Radonovich, ProLiteracy Certified Tutor Trainer, conducted the following 2-day workshops for new volunteers. Unfortunately, class photos are not available.

November 13 and 20 at West Villages Park in North Port:

Ben Abramson, Betty Bellany, Christine Counter, Frances Doyle, Guy Egri, Patricia Law, John Noon, Ken Noone, Cathy Rohrbaugh, Barbara Wojtkiewicz and Elizabeth Zetterstrom.

December 10 and 16 at West Villages Park in North Port:

David Brown, Gil Delfini, Ellen Higdon, Suzanne Hoffman, Lucinda Johnston, Angela Kehren, Marilyn Leahy, Frank Menezes, Hilda Michaud and James Sefick.

February 1 and 8 at Shannon Staub Library in North Port:

Cheryl Bennet, Sara Coast, Naomi George, Iris Griffith, Peter Guptill, John Hooton, Vicky Hunt, Cindy Kjarum, Ken LeBlanc, Susan Mathews, Lorraine Pento, and Wendy Weiland.

The February 1 class was the first North Port class to pair up with Buddies as described on page 7.

Venice

Denise Gastineau, ProLiteracy Certified Tutor Trainer, conducted a 2-day workshop for new tutors on January 17 and 24 at William H. Jervy Jr. Venice Library. The following volunteers attended:

Irene Bauer, Andrea Colaiaco, Vic Colaiaco, David Elwart, Mary Jo Jadin, Michelle Kaiser, Nancy Kennaugh, Marcia Littenberg, Anne Moore, James Parry, Joel Requeima and Anne Robbins.

This was the first Venice class to form Buddy Groups, and the class is pictured under *The Buddy System* article on page 7.



ProLiteracy Education Network is a comprehensive collection of online courses and resources for adult literacy and ESL instructors, program staff, trainers, and adult learners. The web site is:

<https://proliteracy.org/Professional-Development/Education-Network>

To access resources on ProLiteracy Education Network, you'll need to create an account.

Because LVSSC is a ProLiteracy member, LVSSC tutors can enjoy free access to all of the resources on the ProLiteracy Education Network. You will need to provide our Organizational membership number (736896).

Adult Literacy Fact

ProLiteracy was formed in 2002 when Literacy Volunteers of America merged with Laubach Literacy.

**Literacy Volunteers
of South Sarasota County**
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Literacy Changes Lives



FIRST CLASS

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County

www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

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