



English Express

Fall 2023



Maryna Sapeha
LVSSC Student of Pat Teskey
and
New North Port
Third Grade Teacher

Maryna, her husband and their two-year-old son arrived in North Port five years ago from Belarus to join her brother who has lived here for twenty years after he won a green card lottery. While Maryna was still in her home country, her brother advised her to continue to study English. She had started learning English in first grade and continued to study through evening classes while attending University. However, even with this foundation in English, she felt like she "did not know anything" when she arrived.

In Belarus, Maryna was a teacher of Biology and Geography for seven years and was a vice principal for four years. She knew that she wanted to also teach here, but she also knew that her English needed to drastically improve. Her brother told her about the literacy program at the library and she enrolled. Right away she was assigned a tutor and started taking classes. Maryna felt her progress was too slow so she decided that to learn English, she needed to surround herself with English. She started to volunteer at the Kindergarten Prep School in North Port. Shortly thereafter, she became a teaching assistant, but her work schedule conflicted with her tutor's availability. She requested a new tutor, and that is when she started to work with Pat Teskey.

Pat, a retired English as a Second Language Teacher, who spends four-five months each winter in the area, started working with Maryna. They really clicked! Pat was excited to work with such an extremely motivated student. Pat loves teaching and learning about the various countries that her students have come from. They work mostly via Zoom because it provides flexibility of scheduling that works for them even when Pat is in Florida. Pat shares that Maryna works hard, always does her homework and assigned practice. She is very proud of the outstanding

strides that Maryna has made. Presently, they work with Easy English News and sometimes actual news articles or as Maryna says, “hard news articles”.

Maryna was first able to become a teacher at the Kindergarten Prep School. She then took the required proficiency tests in Developmental Knowledge, English, Math, and Science and is now qualified for temporary teacher licensure for pre-school through third grade here in Florida. Congratulations are in order for Maryna. Over this past summer, she became employed as a third-grade teacher at the Lamarque Elementary School in North Port.

At this point, Maryna wants to continue to increase her vocabulary. She says she learns new English words when she hears the word in context, translates it and then memorizes it. One of the things she loves the most about Pat is that Pat has always corrected her speech and had her go back and repeat it correctly. Learning the accepted way to use articles in English has been a struggle, but Pat has been insistent and Maryna has, with much concentration and practice, mastered this challenge.

Maryna believes that it was vitally important for her to volunteer and work in an English-speaking environment to really master the language. Pat believes that students who are as dedicated and motivated as Maryna are a joy to work with and will make great strides in their learning.

Denise Gastineau: Retired Tutor Trainer

LVSSC is very thankful to Denise for the many tutors that she has trained over the years. Her commitment to training adult volunteers has been an essential step in meeting the needs of providing knowledgeable volunteers to work one-on-one with area English language learners. She has recently moved from the area and will be greatly missed. We sincerely thank her for all that she has done to promote literacy here in South Sarasota County.

Denise, a New Jersey native, became a volunteer with LVSSC, teaching tutor training classes in 2017. In her home state, she had amassed a great variety of teaching experiences, having taught high school English and Spanish as well as English Language Learners and Spanish in elementary schools.

Last spring in a conference room in the Venice Library, Denise welcomed her class of seven eager tutors in training. This was the second in a sequence of three half days of training for this particular class.

Posted on the wall of her classroom was the goal of the tutor training course, which is to provide the tutor with the strategies, resources and background necessary to tutor an adult in the skills of reading, writing, and speaking English.

In her class that day, with ease and insight, she presented materials from the “Lit Start” book covering speaking, reading, word study, and writing strategies. Additionally, she and the class discussed American cultural norms compared with those of other countries.

As with all our training sessions, the students in her class were eager to get matched with a student and implement their new learnings tutoring.

Again, many thanks to Denise and we wish her all the best as she acclimates to living in Arizona.



New Board Members: Mary Lou Belisle and Mike Farmer



Mary Lou Belisle joined the LVSSC Board in April of this year. Her professional background includes working in the field of adult literacy. She is pleased to be working with an organization that is committed to helping others gain competency in English, which enables them to more successfully function within our community. Mary Lou believes that the work done by LVSSC is admirable and she is very proud to be a part of this group.

As an educational leader, she worked as the Coordinator of the Basic Literacy Program for the Racine Literacy Council and also became a national trainer for a program developed by the National Institute for Literacy. Prior to her retirement and full-time move to Florida from Wisconsin, she served on the Racine Literacy Council's Board of Directors.

As you can see, Mary Lou brings extensive knowledge and skills related to adult learning and Literacy, as well as educational leadership skills, to her position on the board of LVSSC. We extend a heartfelt welcome to her.

Mike Farmer joined our Board in July of 2023 and is the Treasurer. He was attracted to LVSSC following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the spring of 2022. He was motivated to do something to help the Ukrainian people. He became trained as a tutor a year ago and is tutoring a 40-year-old engineer from Dnipro, Ukraine.

Mike has a passion for helping and sharing his leadership skills with vulnerable populations, both people and animals. He has served as a volunteer and had leadership roles in many nonprofits that are focused on serving this broad constituency: orphans in Myanmar, widows in Myanmar, poor Americans, prisoners, residents of poverty living in substandard nursing homes, people bound to wheelchairs, abandoned thoroughbred race horses, and now he adds tutoring English Language Learners in South Sarasota County to this list of endeavors.



Having worked for 40-years in telecommunications, he and his wife Bobbie are now full-time resident/snowbirds. Welcome Mike, thanks for finding time to tutor and be our board treasurer.

Need a Tutoring Location? Consider the Library at SCF

One mile north of River Road at 8000 N. Tamiami Trail, the campus library at State College of Florida has space for LVSSC tutoring meetings. A room large enough for three-four is available on a first come, first served basis, Monday - Thursday, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, and Fridays, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. If the room is already occupied, other corners of the library may be found to accommodate you and your student. Additionally, you may call to reserve the room, asking for Theresa Ennis-Smith at (941) 408-1435, the head librarian, or ask for her when you arrive. She can also be reached at smithet@scf.edu. The library is located in building 3 in the center of the campus, a 5-minute walk from the parking lot.

Making Great Strides Toward Long Term Goals: Andres P. and Dell Rubin-Smithern

Andres P. is from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, and came into the United States six years ago. His ambition is to be a Master Chef. Andres had two older brothers living in the U.S.A. for several years, but they returned to Guatemala last year without learning English. Andres has a different plan for his life. He wants to love God, love his family, work hard, save his money, learn to read, write, and speak English, marry and raise a family.



Andres has cooked at a local Italian restaurant in Venice, Florida, for the last five years. Andres mastered every item on their menu! Recently, Andres decided it was time to move on to another establishment, where his culinary skills would be more challenged. Andres had to interview in English for his new position by telephone! We all know how difficult speaking on the telephone can be for someone learning a new language. Andres spoke English so well during the telephone interview that he was asked to attend an in-person interview, where he was given a position as a junior chef in a Lakewood Ranch establishment.

Andres is motivated to learn English and achieve his “life-plan”. Recently his tutor had various tutors join them at the Venice Library, so Andres could get used to speaking English with others. There is no doubt that Andres will become a Master Chef one day, and maybe even own his own restaurant! English and hard work are his “Keys to the American Dream.” Andres has been tutored by volunteer Dell Rubin-Smithern since July 2022 at the Venice Library.

Revised Tutor Training Workshops

We are excited to announce that we have developed a new and improved New Tutor Training Workshop. It was developed by Trish Roberts, Sue Spayd, and members from our Tutor Training Development Committee. The new training was debuted in July of 2023 at the United Way of South Sarasota County offices. Carolyn Pearce, who attended training in May, 2023, also attended our New Training Workshop in July and was very impressed and felt like she gained many tools to become a more effective tutor.

The new training is a two-day workshop that promotes discussion and many interactive activities within the new format. Attendees are able to get acquainted with each other and share ideas. This new training concept allows for cohort groups where attendees can stay in touch and communicate with each other after training.

Training will be offered every other month (six times/year) moving forward. In addition to United Way of South Sarasota County hosting our workshops, we are also partnering with State College of Florida of Venice (SCF), which has agreed to host future workshops. SCF is a location closer to North Port and may be more convenient for our North Port area tutors. We are very fortunate to have both United Way and SCF, offer space free of charge to our organization.

Take English to the Next Level- Academic English at SCF

Is college a goal for your student? State College of Florida, Venice Campus, can help your student pursue his or her dreams! Students who have reached at least an intermediate level of English ability may qualify for SCF's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. Located at 8000 S. Tamiami Trail, mid-way between North Port and Venice, State College of Florida offers intermediate and advanced classes in Grammar and Writing, as well as Reading and Speaking.

The goal of the EAP program is to help students cross the bridge from everyday English to the higher level, academic English needed for college success, with a focus on critical reading, accurate writing, advanced vocabulary, and clarity in speaking. EAP courses also work well for those who don't have college plans but want to step up their professional communication skills.

To participate in the EAP program, a student must apply to the College, which includes completing forms and providing documentation. Semesters begin in January and August. Interested students should begin the inquiry and application process as early as possible in order to meet all deadlines, as this process usually takes more than one month.

Many EAP students qualify for Financial Aid, which covers some or all tuition costs. If not, SCF offers a convenient payment plan to spread the tuition cost across the semester.

Students who may qualify for State College of Florida:

- Have a Social Security number
- Are high school graduates from any country AND have a copy of their original diploma and transcript
- Are not tourists on a tourist visa. (SCF accepts many different kinds of visas, including Parolee and Refugee. Be sure to inquire.)

If your student would like to learn more about the English for Academic Purposes program at SCF and begin the application process, you or your student may contact Maria Spelleri at spellem@scf.edu. A face-to-face appointment can also be arranged. If your student isn't sure of his or her level, a quick evaluation of a writing sample can be completed at that time.

October Tutor Luncheon

Sue Spayd, Executive Director, welcomed Board of Director members and tutors. She enthusiastically reminded the tutors that they are a rare and valued resource to the organization. Sue shared that the demand for services has increased 60% over the last two years.



Going forward, the current primary format of one-on-one tutoring will continue to grow as more tutors become available. Additionally, we want to encourage more tutors to become small group class instructors. Small group classes are a very effective model for providing instruction to English language learners and will provide increased opportunities for the well more than 100 students waiting for services. Sue also promoted ongoing professional development opportunities for tutors/instructors through ProLiteracy. Check our website for information on upcoming ProLiteracy offerings. www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

Tutors were asked to consider becoming a monitor for students participating in the smartphone-based app “**Learning Upgrade**”. This is an individualized self-paced and comprehensive approach to English instruction. Student participants are required to participate online a minimum of 2-3 hours weekly. This online resource is a chance for students to receive instruction when one on one tutors are not available, students lack transportation, or students are inconsistently available for regular lessons. To maximize the potential of this program, we need tutors who are willing to monitor student progress and occasionally provide additional support. Please contact Peter or Karen if you are interested in setting up a small class or monitoring Learning Upgrade students.



If you have questions about any of the items referenced in this article, please contact one of the Literacy Office Coordinators. They can be reached by emailing either Peter Norrman, our Venice Literacy Office Coordinator, at venice.literacy@gmail.com or Karen Bridegam, our North Port Literacy Office Coordinator, at north.port.literacy@gmail.com

Following Sue’s remarks, the luncheon buffet was enjoyed. For an hour or so, folks at each table group were afforded time to share and discuss all things tutor/student related. Then a representative from each table shared with the whole group the focus of their sharing. These topics included: the importance of establishing an agreed upon calendar of sessions with your student, the value of creating personal connections, helping students get a library card and introducing them to library services, i.e., recorded books, importance of picture dictionaries, dictionary apps and apps that pronounce words, and having students log/journal their accomplishment and experiences past or present.

In conclusion, as always tutors were encouraged to reach out to friends, neighbors and folks they know to encourage them to join in our important mission. The next tutor training sessions will be held on Nov. 15 and 17 from 9-4. Following this session, training will be offered again after the upcoming holidays.



LVSSC President's Message, by Paddy Padmanabhan

As you get this newsletter, here we are in November, the fifth month of our 2023/2024 fiscal year. It has been a very busy and challenging year. As expected, we are experiencing a higher demand than ever for our services, specifically in the North Port area due to the high influx of immigrants from Ukraine and Russia. I want to express my thanks to all of our tutors, instructors, and volunteers. We are doing our best to serve all the students who approach us to improve their literacy skills.

As you may know, we have a new tutor trainer in Patricia (Trish) Roberts. She is a highly experienced retired teacher and a committed board member. Trish has revamped the training program to ensure that the training is meaningful, interactive, and provides the skills and tools needed to become an effective tutor. Our previous trainers, Denise Gastineau and Lavonne Radonovich, did a magnificent job for a very long time in training many of our current tutors. Their years of service and dedication to our organization are very much appreciated.

As we move forward, it is our objective to ensure that we accommodate all the students requiring our services. As most of our students fall somewhere between Level Zero and Level Three, we are working on providing more group classes (class size determined by the tutor and availability of students in the similar category) as opposed to individual/one on one tutoring for these students. The board arrived at this decision based on the evidence that people at these levels learn better in a group setting and that we can better accommodate our student's needs. We fully understand that this could pose some challenges in terms of availability of spaces to conduct group classes. Our energetic Executive Director, Sue Spayd, is working hard to find solutions. If you have ideas and suggestions, please share them with Sue as it is a challenging proposition. Sue needs all our help. For example, if you are very active in a place of worship, please check to see if we could use a space within their building to conduct our classes.

Tutors! Tutors! Tutors! Yes, we need more tutors. As you socialize with your friends and family during the coming holiday season, please keep an eye out to recruit new volunteer tutors and/or small group instructors.

Teaching Tips: Pronunciation, Fluency, and Comprehension

When introducing a new text to a student it is a good idea to pre-teach vocabulary by introducing new or words that you anticipate will be difficult words for them to understand or pronounce. It is also important to provide multiple opportunities for the student to pronounce these challenging words.

Tutors can teach their students how to use technology to enhance their pronunciation. Search in Google for: **how to pronounce** (insert the word you want to hear). This site will pronounce the word, record the student saying the word, and offer suggestions for improvement in pronouncing the word.

To increase fluency and comprehension, **the first reading of a passage should be read aloud by the teacher** reading with expression, modeling pronunciation and fluency. This reading should be followed by the student reading the text and responding to tasks that encourage them to return to the text and identify the evidence for their answers. Providing tasks that require the student to reread the text multiple times is very beneficial for developing reading fluency and comprehension.

Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and diligence.

~ Abigail Adams ~

Revenue, Expenses, and Net Assets For the Year Ending June 30, 2023

Revenue

Contributions	\$ 47,641
Grants	\$ 14,658
Special Events – Fox Lea Farm and Southwest Airlines Raffle	\$ 2,933
Interest Accrued on I-Bonds	\$ 1,708
United Way	<u>\$ 9,500</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 96,241

Use of Sarasota County Libraries in Venice and North Port
and the skilled services provided by our wonderful volunteers **PRICELESS!**

Expenses

Accounting and State Fees	\$ 138
Annual Meeting (programs & food)	\$ 171
Community Outreach/Recruitment	\$ 1,166
Copier Maintenance and Copies	\$ 331
Database LACES	\$ 1,051
Equipment Purchases	\$ 2,461
Hot Spots Services Fees	\$ 360
Insurance – Directors and Officers	\$ 809
Memberships – National, State, Local	\$ 557
Occupancy at North Port Family Service Center	\$ 5,295
Office Supplies & Software	\$ 1,751
Printing, Publishing, Postage, Shipping	\$ 1,075
Special Events – 40 th Anniversary	\$ 67
Telephone & Internet – Office at N.P. Family services Center	\$ 737
Training Materials and Learning Upgrade app for Students	\$ 7,363
Volunteer/Student Recognition	\$ 370
Wages and Payroll Taxes	\$46,155
Website, Domain Names, Zoom	<u>\$ 552</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 90,209

Changes in Net Assets

Net Assets – Beginning of Year	\$85,633
Excess or (Deficit) for 2022-2023	<u>\$ 6,032</u>
Net Assets – End of Year	\$ 91,665

***Thank You for Your Financial Support
July 2022 – 2023***

\$9,000 and over

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United Way of South Sarasota County

\$6,000 - \$8,999

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Venice Golf & Country Club Community Foundation

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Thank you to everyone who made individual and family membership contributions.



Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County
www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

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www.flanzertrust.org/make-a-donation/

For more information, click on the www.LiteracyChangesLives.org link at the top of this page, and then click on DONATE on the orange menu.

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