At New Jersey Natural Gas, we believe a quality education is among the most important investments we can make in the future of our communities. Our Energy for Education programs provide assistance with college and career preparation, helping students succeed in school and beyond.

Thank You For Making Our Communities Better Every Day!
April 27, 2019

Dear Friends of Literacy New Jersey,

Welcome to the Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey 2019 annual conference.

As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we are honored to be in the company of so many dedicated teachers and tutors. You have made a direct and profound impact on helping New Jerseyans who have struggled with literacy. With the help of 2,036 tutors, 5,577 adult students were served last year. This is the equivalent of a $3.4 million contribution to NJ.

Our anniversary has given us the chance to reflect on all we have accomplished together over the years. Our conference program recognizes tutors who have given 15 or more years as volunteers and we are honored today to have our former students as our guest speakers. These are just a few of the many people who have made our organization a powerful force for literacy since 1979.

You helped give someone the joy of being able to read or speak English and allowed them to enjoy a powerful sense of self-esteem with a new-found skill. All of you deserve well-earned praise for your selfless contribution. I hope that today you have the chance to meet new friends, renew old friendships, learn something valuable and have the time to enjoy each other’s company.

Warmest regards and the hope for a successful conference,

Christine D’Agostino
Board of Trustees President
**CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**
8:00–8:45am Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:00–10:30am Workshop Session 1
10:30–10:45am Break
10:45am–12:15pm Workshop Session 2
12:15–1:45pm Awards Luncheon & Guest Speakers
2:00–3:30pm Workshop Session 3

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AWARDS LUNCHEON

GUEST SPEAKERS
Israel Antoine
Faleeha Hassan

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

ALICE M. LEPPERT AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING AFFILIATE ACHIEVEMENT
Literacy Volunteers of Pascack Valley

2019 AWARD FOR VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE
Elidema Mireles, Literacy Volunteers Association - Cape Atlantic

2019 AWARD FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE
Gloria Orjuela, Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

2019 LITERACY CHAMPION
Anita Alvarado, Literacy NJ

Welcome to our vendors, New Readers Press, Think60, & Townsend Press.

Our thanks to Townsend Press, Grass Roots Press, and USCIS for donating resource materials. Thank you to ProLiteracy for your continued support!

Thanks to Barnes & Noble, Applebees, WaWa, Staples and Wegman’s for supplying door prizes.

We appreciate your support!
GENERAL INFORMATION

CONNECT TO THE WIRELESS NETWORK: “Welcome-to-TCNJ”

Choose the link under “TCNJ Guests”

Enter your information and click “Register”

The login page will then open. Enter the email address that you provided as well as the password sent to you by the system via text message or email.

#lit4life
Share your experience on social media!
Post on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or Twitter using the hashtag #lit4life to help spread the word. Show your post at the registration desk for an extra raffle ticket!

Smile! You may be photographed or videotaped during the conference. All attendees of the Literacy for Life Conference at Brower Student Center, TCNJ, on April 27, 2019 consent by their participation to the reproduction of their likenesses in connection with the photography and videotaping of conference events.
**KAREN MCGREGOR** was an accomplished and devoted reading specialist, drawn to those with reading or learning disabilities who needed help. She was an effective teacher, as her many awards attest, but she was more than that, she was relentless. Believing that anyone could learn to read, she was determined to see that as many as she could recruit, encourage, motivate and teach and tutor would do so. Karen was an invaluable asset to LV-Sussex County, serving over the years as a tutor, student intake interviewer, lead trainer, interim executive director, program coordinator, and match coordinator. From 1997 to 2005, Karen was a state trainer for Literacy Volunteers of NJ, developing a well-earned reputation as a superb trainer and supervisor of other trainers. She created and conducted in-service training on a variety of subjects for other affiliates and at state level conferences. It would be rare for anyone to “pass” Karen’s training without feeling totally confident in what they were about to do, not only to help others to read but to be dogged but patient, dedicated, even devoted, and, of course, skilled and empathetic as they did it. This was about changing people’s’ lives, after all, about making them better. As she said herself, “Literacy is not just about reading.” Many of the people she trained and tutored became lifelong friends. We will miss Karen and remember her as a great leader and role model in our network.

**MARTHA DAVIS** was born in Bonyhad, Hungary, Martha immigrated to the United States with her family in 1950 and became a proud U.S. citizen in 1956. After raising a family and working for many years at Johnson & Johnson, she became an active community volunteer. She began her LV-Somerset County service as a tutor in 2002, then a Conversation Group leader and volunteer on multiple board committees. In 2008 Martha was named as the LVSC board president where she remained for the past decade. Martha guided LVSC through both prosperous and challenging times, never wavering in her commitment and always inspiring others to stay the course. Martha’s actions and decisions always reflected her personal belief that acquiring English literacy was key to success and happiness in our country. She knew that LVSC’s ability to offer free literacy services hinged directly on the commitment of quality volunteers and the financial stability of our organization. As such she was always incredibly grateful for the generosity of our volunteers and supporters. Martha leaves a legacy of dedicated, compassionate service and leadership. Martha was a gentle soul, beloved leader, and caring friend; she is greatly missed by her LVSC friends.

**SUSAN REIMER** received her B.A. in business administration from Montclair University and worked as a project manager for Prudential Financial in Newark for many years, retiring in 2014. In addition to being a very active volunteer with her church, Susan also volunteered with Literacy New Jersey Sussex County and was always willing to offer help where it was needed. She worked as a tutor, developed the training programs, trained new tutors, and ran ESL, citizenship and conversation classes. In serving the mission of literacy, Sue accomplished much more than seemed possible for one person. Her special gift was to get to the crux of a matter immediately and propose a solution—always graciously. Therefore one of her invaluable contributions was coordinating the work of her fellow-volunteers. Yet simultaneously she did not stint on her own specific roles, and when asked to help with a specific student’s needs, she made time for that as well. Whatever Sue could contribute, she did full-heartedly. Sue was a great worker and also a great leader; she is deeply missed by all of us who had the pleasure to know her.
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BE IN A POSITION OF STRENGTH™

Set yourself apart from the rest and turn simple visions into phenomenal success stories. Withum is proud to support Literacy New Jersey for providing adults with the skills needed to read, write and communicate effectively, helping ensure they reach their life goals.

Alex Dundara, CPA, MBA
Proud to support

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Literacy for Life Conference
SESSION ONE 9:00–10:30AM

Engaging Young Volunteers

This workshop will focus on how to recruit and engage young volunteers in the 18-25 range. Participants will learn how to network and partner with colleges and universities, as well as community organizations, to recruit, engage, and choose projects that will encourage young volunteers to contribute to the success of your nonprofit organization.

Laura Repsher and Christine Larsen-Britt, Rowan University

TARGET AUDIENCE: Board Members and Staff/Program Administrators

ROOM 222

Creative Workshop Designs Using ProLiteracy’s New Tutor Training Materials

Now that ProLiteracy has released its new Basic Literacy and ESL Tutor Training Materials, you may be asking yourself “How can I use them effectively?” In this workshop, we’ll discuss different workshop designs, including a combined basic literacy and ESL workshop, a short pre-service training with additional in-service training, and blended training. The group will discuss how to customize the training materials to meet local needs and where to begin integrating these new materials into current training.

Todd Evans, ProLiteracy

GENERAL AUDIENCE: Board Members, Staff/Program Administrators, Trainers

ROOM 225 EAST

Naturalization 101

This introductory session highlights the naturalization eligibility and filing requirements and provides insight into the naturalization interview and oath ceremony. The session will include helpful customer service self-help tools, as well tips for individuals seeking legal immigration assistance.

Kelly Ayala, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services—Newark District

GENERAL AUDIENCE

ROOM 100 West

Become a More Confident Student

In this workshop, we’re going to learn techniques we can practice to become more confident. For example, our facial expressions, posture, and gestures are important tools that we sometimes overlook. We will learn how to improve our body language and tone of voice to communicate with others with strength and conviction.

Perla Rotemberg & Melissa Bernstein, Literacy NJ Middlesex

TARGET AUDIENCE: Adult Learners

ROOM 101

Making Mathematics Second Nature

Does your students’ math anxiety and lack of comfort with numbers hinder their learning? Learn a variety of ways to lessen their anxiety and help them gain confidence. Participants will be asked to work with others in low stress hands-on math skills building activities using dice and Math Learning Circles. Participants will use a 20 by 20 multiplication chart and be shown how to use it to teach division along with addition and subtraction. Participants will also be provided with sample math test problems and will practice different approaches to teaching problems in non traditional ways.

Robert Rowlett, Prospect College: Career Pathways Program Coordinator

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Teachers & Tutors, Trainers

ROOM 224

Fake News: Helping Your Student Find Credible News Sources

This workshop is designed to coach tutors on how to help adult learners critically analyze and question online and print news sources. Participants will learn how to help their students identify credible news sources, question media output, and conduct research on current events to ensure that students are receiving accurate information in today’s over-saturated media.

Jennifer Tole, Rowan University

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 100 West

An Easy Guide to Working with Small Groups

Are you transitioning from one-to-one to group tutoring? This workshop will provide help preparing lessons to use with small groups, and include group management techniques and specific activities and materials to encourage conversation and promote the sharing of ideas and opinions within the group. Emphasis will be on structuring lessons around practical topics, with “Occupations” as the topic of discussion for this workshop.

Barbara Hathaway and Nancy Lama, Literacy NJ Union

TARGET AUDIENCE: ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 104
Engaging Activities for the ESOL Classroom

In this workshop, tutors will learn how to think beyond the traditional classroom setting to create interactive and dynamic ways of engaging ESOL students. From grammar games to self-esteem boosters, tutors will learn a multitude of fun exercises as well as how to tap into their own creativity to develop a motivating and fun ESOL class.

Valerie Tomaszewski, Literacy NJ Burlington County

TARGET AUDIENCE: ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 225 West

SESSION TWO 10:45AM–12:15PM

Harnessing the Power of Stories

The language we choose and the strategy we put behind communicating ideas are more important than we sometimes realize. In this interactive workshop you’ll learn how to inspire rather than just inform by unleashing the storyteller inside all of us. Your mission comes when you know how to “put why before what” and practice “messaging in three acts.”

Jon Shure, Taft Communications

TARGET AUDIENCE: Board Members and Staff/Program Administrators

ROOM 224

Literacy NY Online Tutor Training: Builds Capacity, Promotes Positive Outcomes

Literacy New York, a support organization for 34 volunteer literacy organizations in upstate New York and Long Island, implemented facilitated online training in 2015 to prepare volunteers to teach adult basic literacy and English language learners. The suite of training-- Intake to Outcomes or I2O-- has grown to include training in Math Basics and Numeracy, as well as Employability Soft Skills. Participants will learn how training is delivered effectively online and how it is managed, maintained, and updated to reflect changes in teaching methodology, funding, and WIOA legislation. Computers will be provided so participants can sample the training.

Kathy Houghton, Literacy NY

GENERAL AUDIENCE: Board Members, Staff/Program Administrators, Trainers

ROOM 225 East

Student Roundtable: Tips & Tricks for Excelling at Learning

Students will have a round table discussion on the tips, and tricks that helped them improve their English. Students will talk to each other about the lessons, resources, and homework that they found most helpful. There will also be an option of being recorded, to share their tips with other fellow students who missed this discussion. Talk about your success, share it with each other, and keep improving!

Meenakshi Nalalagappan & Melissa Bernstein, Literacy NJ Middlesex

TARGET AUDIENCE: Adult Learners

ROOM 101

Integrating Critical Thinking Into Every Lesson

It’s not enough for students to learn skills, strategies, and processes for reading, writing and math. For students to be confident and successful in using these skills, they need to be able to understand and evaluate information and solve problems. In this workshop, teachers will learn how to integrate critical thinking skills into every lesson. Participants will learn techniques to help students build skills in gathering information, use graphic organizers to understand it, and then use questioning techniques to examine the information critically. Application of strategies will include reading, writing, and math.

Todd Evans, ProLiteracy

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 100 West

Choose and Use Reading Levels that Work for Your Student

Tutors are often challenged by the idea of selecting reading materials that are level-appropriate, yet still challenging for their student. In this workshop, participants will learn how to determine a student’s reading abilities using sample texts, as well as how and where to find and use the proper materials in the classroom and tutoring sessions to ensure students are increasing their reading comprehension skills. Participants will also learn how to pick up on verbal and nonverbal cues to determine a student’s area of struggle, and how to react effectively so that reading becomes a positive and enjoyable experience for the student.

Fay Crooks, Literacy NJ Gloucester County

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 222
Vocabulary Development Strategies Using Multiple Literacy Resources

Students need to internalize vocabulary development strategies beyond the classroom to become independent readers and advanced speakers. The workshop will present useful strategies of instruction to help educators present a deeper level of classroom work on vocabulary development. Participants will explore the vocabulary pyramid, vocabulary transfers from other languages, activities that focus on reading samples from texts and poetry, and other strategies that help students to read between the lines and not get “stuck” on vocabulary words. Participants will receive material that can be used immediately in their classes.

Diana Sefchik, Raritan Valley Community College and Seton Hall University

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors & Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 225 West

Identifying Your Student’s Marketable Skills

This workshop will help provide tutors and staff with the tools needed to assist students in a more focused job search. Tutors will learn how to help their students accurately identify their skills and how to leverage their abilities to help them enhance their resume, ace the interview, and land an appropriate and long lasting career in their intended field.

Maggie Bonanni Land, Rutgers Camden

GENERAL AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors & Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 104

SESSION THREE 2:00–3:30PM

Cultural Literacy: Know Yourself First

The best cultural literacy starts with understanding our own cultural conditioning and worldviews. This interactive workshop will offer tools to better communicate and interact with students from marginalized populations, with a focus on two aspects of cultural diversity: (1) understanding the impact of early messages on the individual and how those messages shape prejudice, stereotypes, bias, and implicit bias; and (2) the development of diversity skills, including cultural self-awareness, empathy, cultural interaction, tolerance of ambiguity, awareness of stereotypes, and intercultural communication.

Robin Parker & Pamela Smith Chambers, Beyond Diversity Resource Center

GENERAL AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESL Tutors, Trainers, Staff/Program Administrators, Board Members

ROOM 100 West

Reaching the Finish Line: Setting Goals as an Adult Learner

Setting goals can help us focus our learning. In this workshop, students will learn how to set specific goals. We will set goals for education, careers, and in our personal lives. We will also break down goals into stages. Each student will leave with a plan of the steps needed to reach their goals.

Donna Tchir-Spence, Literacy NJ Ocean County

GENERAL AUDIENCE: Adult Learners

ROOM 101

Career Pathways in Adult Education

Participants in this workshop will learn about a curriculum modeled around in demand careers, designed for students who are studying to obtain their high school diplomas. This workshop will also spotlight ideas for ESL programs in need of Integrated Education and Training (IET) components.

Joe Spencer, Rowan College of Gloucester County

TARGET AUDIENCE: Tutors, Teachers and Trainers

ROOM 222

Steps for Success: Supporting your Basic Literacy Students

Learn about a curriculum designed to assist your basic literacy students in identifying goals, creating a reading routine and discovering independent learning resources. The goal of the program is to establish learning habits in the lives of our basic literacy students so they are better equipped to succeed as they challenge themselves to learn new skills. Participants will receive a set of lessons they can use with their students.

Rebecca Powers, Literacy NJ Burlington County

TARGET AUDIENCE: Staff/Program Administrators, Basic Literacy Tutors & Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 224

Everyday English: Incorporating Real World Skills Into Conversation Groups

Adult English language learners are often pressed with urgent and important needs. In this workshop, participants will learn how to structure and develop ESOL conversation groups and activities for advanced students that center around real life situations and goals. Participants will learn how to identify students’ conversational goals and obstacles, as well as methods of creating student-led speaking activities and role playing exercises that allow students to increase their ability to navigate the English speaking world.

Ronda Brown, Literacy NJ Gloucester County
TARGET AUDIENCE: ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 225 West

Using Free Technology to Increase Student Engagement

This workshop will review several free digital tools that tutors and teachers can use to develop hands-on activities for students and to connect with students outside of meetings. The presenter will share some example projects and work with participants to brainstorm potential projects they can take up with their own students. Participants will have the opportunity to stay connected after the conference using the tools presented. The workshop will take place in a computer lab, so participants do not need to bring their own computers.

Erik Jacobson, Montclair State University

TARGET AUDIENCE: Basic Literacy/ESOL Tutors & Teachers, Trainers

ROOM 225 East

Culture as an Asset in Assessing Student Proficiency

This workshop will discuss and break down the various ways of accurately assessing students’ language levels using non-formal assessments. Tutors will learn how to informally determine their student’s language abilities as well as how to create appropriate language goals and access pertinent content. A special focus will be on how culture plays an important role in language acquisition, and how tutors can use multiculturalism in assessing their students. Attendees will also have the opportunity to practice activities that can help determine language level and discuss how curriculum can be modified to meet the needs of individuals at any stage of language acquisition.

Charlotte Perez, Literacy Volunteers of Camden County

TARGET AUDIENCE: ESOL Tutors and Teachers, Trainers, Staff/Program Administrators

ROOM 104
ISRAEL ANTOINE

came to Literacy Volunteers of Union County in 2002. A young man in his early twenties, he had graduated from Elizabeth High School reading at the third grade level. He was working in maintenance and was afraid his boss would find out about his reading difficulties and he would lose his job. He and his tutor worked together to prepare Israel for the boiler exam and after a year of hard work and dogged determination, Israel passed his exam and earned his Black Seal. During the few years Israel was in the program, he tackled his goals one by one. His progress allowed him to read work orders, newspapers, and even Treasure Island, a book he had always wanted to read. He created a resume, set up an email account and started using the internet, and most importantly to Israel, learned to read the bible. Israel began leading bible study groups and studying to become a minister. He also became a spokesperson for Literacy Volunteers, speaking not only at tutor training but in presentations to local service groups and even on a radio show, proving to be a powerful advocate for our students. In 2005, Israel received Literacy NJ’s Award for Student Excellence. After graduating from the program, Israel and his wife helped found Rock Christian Fellowship, a church in Newark that offers not only bible study but a myriad of services for the community, including a youth program and support for addiction issues. Israel is working as maintenance department manager for a school and has three children, ages 12, 9, and 6, who can always count on their father for homework help. We are so proud of all Israel has accomplished and honored to have him return to Literacy NJ as our guest speaker.

FALEEHA HASSAN

joined the Literacy NJ Gloucester family with a unique history. Born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1967, Faleeha earned an MA in Arabic literature and had earned success and acclaim, not only as a teacher, but as a published author and poet. As the first woman from Najaf to be published, Faleeha quickly found success, publishing 15 books of poetry, as well as numerous short stories, plays, and novels. Her success, however, also brought upon her the need to flee the militant groups in her native country who opposed her work, and in 2012 she resettled in NJ with extremely minimal English skills. When her daughter fell ill one night, Faleeha found herself unable to communicate with 911 operators, doctors, and nurses, and so she threw herself into learning English. With the help of her tutor Emily, Faleeha is now beginning to reach new levels of success in her career and personal life. Literacy NJ’s citizenship courses have helped her pass the test to become an American citizen, and she is now able to easily carry a conversation with anyone in English. Her literature is now reaching American audiences, she has won awards throughout Europe and the Middle East, has recently been profiled in Oprah magazine, and for the first time in her life is learning to write in English without the help of a translator. Despite her remarkable achievements, Faleeha remains humbly connected to her roots, and has not forgotten the struggle of being a newly landed refugee. She proudly serves on the community board for Literacy NJ Gloucester where she helps connect students to literacy services. Faleeha is an incredible example of how starting over in a new country can lead to remarkable things, and we are honored to have her with us to share her story.
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Literacy NJ is creating a book to commemorate our fortieth anniversary. Help us fill in the blanks on our timeline! Email your memories, photos, articles, student writing, and other contributions to Jessica at jtomkins@literacynj.org.

**LOCATIONS OF LITERACY VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY GROUPS 1983**

**Fighting illiteracy, one-on-one**

**Literacy Volunteers of NJ founded**

**Locate Volunteers of America Inc.**

**Volunteers help ease barrier of language**

**Literacy Volunteers founded:**
- Pascack Valley, Somerset, Atlantic
- Project Literacy of Greater Bergen
- Burlington, Camden, Essex, Morris
- Englewood, Gloucester, Jersey City
- Cape May, Salem, Bergenfield, Union
- West Hudson, Hunterdon, Ocean, Sussex, and Monmouth

1979 1983 by 1987 1989
Literacy NJ is creating a book to commemorate our fortieth anniversary. Help us fill in the blanks on our timeline! Email your memories, photos, articles, student writing, and other contributions to Jessica at jtomkins@literacynj.org.

Literacy Volunteers of NJ founded 1979

- 1983
- 1989

Literacy Volunteers founded:
- Pascack Valley, Somerset, Atlantic,
- Project Literacy of Greater Bergen,
- Burlington, Camden, Essex, Morris
- Englewood, Gloucester, Jersey City,
- Cape May, Salem, Bergenfield, Union,
- West Hudson, Hunterdon, Ocean,
- Sussex, and Monmouth

by 1987

Published Guide for Training, adopted in 20 states

Seven nonprofits merge to form Literacy New Jersey

Hosted NJ’s first Health Literacy Summit

Literacy Volunteers of Bethany founded

LITERACY FOR LIFE CONFERENCE

2019 AWARDS
The Literacy Volunteers of Pascack Valley affiliate is a consortium of libraries providing a top quality ESL program that can be customized for each individual community. This means that in addition to providing ESL services at the Westwood Public Library, the program provides training and support services for a network including nine other libraries in Bergen County. Together their network serves over 500 students each year.

In 2018 LV-Pascack Valley wanted to bolster awareness of who they are in order to attract additional prospective tutors and students to the program. They created an outreach program that included producing videos of tutors and students and becoming a site for Naturalization Ceremonies. Both efforts have helped them increase awareness about their program and advocate for the immigrants they serve.

As a way to deliver their narrative, they decided to direct, film and edit videos of interviews with current students and tutors describing their experiences while participating in the ESL program. A student describes why she joined, “First, I wanted to speak English because I like to express my opinion, and I wanted my daughter to feel proud of me” and a tutor who answered a flyer 15 years ago and has been tutoring ever since. The completed version of these videos is also shown at the fourth and final session of their Tutor Training Workshop.

In April of 2018, LV-Pascack Valley hosted their first Naturalization Ceremony for new citizens at the Westwood Public Library. Eighteen new citizens took their oath of allegiance before local politicians, family and friends. Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi and Mayor John Birkner, Jr. spoke at the event. Representatives from Senator Gerald Cardinale and Senator Josh Gottheimer’s office also attended. A second Naturalization Ceremony is scheduled for this spring.

The Naturalization Ceremonies have been well-received. The Mayor of Westwood is especially pleased with the ceremony being held at the library as it shows Westwood as being a welcoming and inclusive community. The local newspaper, “Pascack Press” highlighted the event with an extensive article on the ceremony along with a photo and caption. As a result of this publicity, their literacy office has received requests from other ESL programs asking for advice on their holding a Naturalization Ceremony.

LV-Pascack’s outreach project is indicative of a program culture that respects its participants and embraces their diverse community. They are a great example of the potential for literacy programs in our libraries, and a role model for developing programs.

We are proud to present LV-Pascack Valley with the Outstanding Affiliate Award in recognition their thoughtful efforts to raise awareness of their program and their leadership among libraries. Congratulations to the Westwood Public Library on 100 years of service, and thank you for all you do to support LV-Pascack Valley!
ELI MIRELES has volunteered for LVA for 4 years as a tutor and administrative volunteer. In the midst of a difficult year with greatly reduced staff hours, Eli has been nothing less than a lifesaver.

Eli, a retired attorney, is a quietly brilliant person. She is a quick study, helps whenever and wherever help is needed and is devoted to helping students. Eli contributes bilingual and excellent computer skills; she works diligently and accurately. Her talent for always bringing positivity to the team is unmatched.

Eli has increased LVA’s ability to communicate with Spanish speaking students, as she is bilingual. She has greatly improved LVA’s customer service because of her language aptitude. Eli helps students who have reading, language or computer problems with on-line job applications. This was an especially important task over the past months as two new casinos came on line with opportunities for employment.

Eli has been an active tutor since 2015 and has tutored a thriving group in Hammonton, an otherwise underserved location, since 2017. She works well with other administrative volunteers, one of whom is Chinese and came here to improve her English. Eli has also assisted the Program Director with off-site testing and test scoring.

Eli has enabled the program director to maximize the eight hours per week she works. Taking the job of data entry off her hands allows the program director to focus her hours on tutor and student follow up and continuing education.

“Eli is an intelligent, kind, generous person who brings those qualities to everyone here”, said LVA’s Program Director, Katherine Micale.

“Eli lifts our spirits with her calm and consistent demeanor. Eli is a gracious friend to all who cross LVA’s threshold and a positive, supportive influence at all times.

She takes on tasks that otherwise might not be tackled. Eli was brought to the U.S. as an infant and has accomplished so much in her life, including her professional career as a successful attorney. We have been blessed that she chose the mission of literacy as her way to give back.”

LVA nominated Eli Mireles this year because staff reductions resulted in the critical need for expert volunteer support. Eli rose to LVA’s challenges of 2018 with open arms. It’s been a difficult time for their program, but Eli has brought LVA through it with her generous spirit and her trustworthy, loyal nature. Eli is a volunteer who would be celebrated in any year, but in 2018 Literacy Volunteers Association Cape Atlantic could not have succeeded without her.

We are proud to present Elidema Mireles with the 2019 Volunteer Excellence Award, in recognition of her generous gift of both her time and her talents in support of LVA Cape Atlantic’s mission.

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Literacy Volunteers of Monmouth County

S U P P O R T S

LNJ and the Literacy for Life Conference
GLORIA ORJUELA arrived in the U.S. with beginner English and, in her own words, progress hindered mostly by one factor: fear. There was the fear of asking for help, even for directions on the street; the distress of answering the telephone; and the everyday anxiety of knowing that someone might say something she didn’t understand, and react unkindly when she couldn’t respond. But much has changed for this Bogota, Colombia native since arriving in the states in 2017. She now routinely speaks to strangers, as shown by the daily calls she places as an office volunteer. She is much more confident in her meetings at her daughters’ schools. And her verbal proficiency, reading, and writing skills have improved immensely. In two years she has gone from a beginner’s ESL class at LVA to the highest level of proficiency in the New Community Corporation Adult Learning Center’s high school equivalency program.

Gloria had three basic life goals when she entered the program. She wanted to be involved in her daughters’ lives at school, to work in an office setting and contribute to a company that requires a worker to communicate in English, and to overcome her fear of speaking in English on the telephone. She met these goals by immersing herself in the tasks of the offices of her English programs.

Gloria earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting in Colombia and became a budget coordinator, the third-highest position in a company of 5,000. A similar position in the U.S. requires a CPA designation, a difficult undertaking for most holders of accounting degrees earned overseas, but Gloria is determined to do whatever is required to resume her career.

As for her volunteerism, as much as it helps others, Gloria says it has helped her more. She is able to communicate with her children’s’ teachers and is now a volunteer in their schools. Gloria is at every one of her daughters’ games, no longer afraid to converse with other parents. These efforts are not lost on her children. One daughter recently greeted Gloria with, “I am happy to have you as a mom. I couldn’t have a better mom than you. Mom, you have changed a lot.”

Gloria is a group facilitator for LVA’s English-Spanish Language Exchange Program; she prepares and teaches lessons in Spanish and helps run the group. Gloria frequently appears as a speaker at tutor training workshops to ease the fears of new tutors. LVA counts on her to help retain their trainees. Her success at public speaking led to her being recruited to Toastmasters International.

Gloria takes every opportunity to improve her English. She attends classes four times a week to improve her vocabulary and grammar. She even attends LVA’s monthly tutor support workshops. At 6:30 am, Gloria will be found on her daily walk, listening to English language podcasts on her headphones.

“We have seen Gloria grow and begin to carry herself with great confidence as she gets more comfortable with her English,” said Ellen Martin, recruitment & training coordinator for LVA. “She walks with pride into our office, managing everything each person on the staff throws at her at once.” Students who watch her move easily from one language to the other naturally want to do the same. And she’s a mentor to other office volunteers, directing them as they take on new assignments.

No doubt about it, Gloria has the same fears as any learner of a foreign language. What makes her unique is that she confronts those fears daily, inspiring all those around her.

We are proud to present Gloria Orjuela with the 2019 Student Excellence Award in recognition of her hard work and many contributions to her literacy program.
ANITA ALVARADO came to Literacy NJ to improve her English so she could help her children with their homework, talk with their teachers, and read notes from the school. Originally from Ecuador, Anita received a degree from Universidad de Azuay in Business Administration and worked as a currency manager for a bank.

Anita came to Literacy NJ in March 2015 and started as a low intermediate student. She studied with a tutor and attended conversation classes and quickly improved her English skills. The next year she offered to volunteer in the office making phone calls and helping out with assorted tasks. It quickly became clear that Anita was organized, dedicated, had a wonderful phone manner, and generally enjoyed being able to give back for the help she had received as a student.

Anita spoke at a tutor recognition event and expressed her gratitude, saying, “It is a blessing for me to stay here with each and every one of you, people who help me without any pay or reward, give me your time, your advice, your knowledge, always with a purpose that I am well in my life and I can progress in a new country, new people, new customs and everything that is new for me…You not only help me, you help my family, too – my lovely children, and my everyday life, because now I can communicate with people.” Anita had already become a generous volunteer in her new country, giving her time and sharing her positive outlook.

In September 2017, Anita joined the staff of Literacy NJ as an Administrative Assistant. In this role Anita has excelled, providing students with comprehensive information about the program as well as developing ideas for improving and enhancing office practices. Having been through the program as a student, she brings a different perspective to the student intake process. On the practical side, she has used her organizational and technical skills to streamline the process and increase the number of students served.

On the personal side, she understands students’ concerns and fears about the process and finds ways to welcome and reassure them each step of the way.

When it comes to dealing with delicate or uncomfortable issues with students, she is the consummate diplomat.

As someone who has worked hard and made the most of opportunities available to her, her authenticity resonates with donors as much as it does with students. She has become an advocate and spokesperson for the organization with good results.

Anita is not one to “rest on her laurels”. Having reached a more advanced level, she continues to study to improve her fluency, and is hoping to attend training this fall to become a tutor. Longer term, Anita would like to become more involved and increase her responsibilities in the Literacy NJ organization.

We are proud to present Anita Alvarado with the 2019 Literacy Champion Award in recognition of her success, her commitment, and her leadership.
Community FIRST

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NIKKI DIETEL has tutored with the Westwood Public Library since 1980 and helped found LV-Pascack Valley. She received Literacy NJ’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

Thank you!

LOUISE HIKADE (left) with her student, Lisa. Louise has volunteered for Literacy NJ Burlington since 1986.

LV-BURLINGTON

JACKIE FLAMM has volunteered with LV-Somerset County for the past 32 years.

LV-SOMERSET COUNTY

NIKKI DIETEL has tutored with the Westwood Public Library since 1980 and helped found LV-Pascack Valley.

LV-PASCACK VALLEY

30+ YEARS OF SERVICE
Nikki Dietel, LV-PV Westwood
Jacqueline Flamm, LV-Somerset County
Louise Hikade, Literacy NJ Burlington
June Sefcik, LV-PV Westwood
Joanne Thomas, LV-Bergenfield

25+ YEARS OF SERVICE
Liela Bernstein, Literacy NJ Union
Janet Chambers, LV-PV River Vale
Daniel Colodner, LV-Somerset County

20+ YEARS OF SERVICE
Amy DiFilippo, LV-Monmouth County
James Drew, LV-PV Westwood
Arlene Fultonberg, LV-PV River Vale
Harold Gainer, LV-PV Hillsdale
Claire M. Hothem, LV-PV Park Ridge
Francesca Ianora, LV-PV Emerson
Margaret Redman, Literacy NJ Mercer
Robert Ritzer, LV-Bergenfield

15+ YEARS OF SERVICE
Robert Bounczek, LVA Essex & Passaic
Sharon Caldwell, LV-Somerset County
Allison Caulfield, LV-Somerset County
Nadira Dahodwala, Literacy NJ Middlesex
Richard Densberger, LV-PV Hillsdale
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Cindy Gordon, Literacy NJ Mercer
Robert Hespe, LV-Monmouth County
Andrea Ismail, Jersey City Literacy Program
Mary Kao, LVA Essex & Passaic
Ellen Lospinuso, LV-Monmouth County
Sydell Kessler-Levy, Literacy NJ Union
Jerry McCaffrey, LV-PV Emerson
James Morgan, Literacy NJ Middlesex
Mary Morris, Literacy NJ Middlesex
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