



LITERACY MATTERS

NOVEMBER 2019



**LITERACY
NASSAU**

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

What You'll Find in this Issue:

Donation of Decodables 2

Student Spotlight: Alucha Charles 2

Happy Birthday 2

Guru Krupa Externs 3

Day of Bridge Photos 4

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LITERACY AND EMPLOYMENT: A TIMELESS CONNECTION

(submitted by Irv Miljoner)

I am proud to be one of the longest serving members of Literacy Nassau's Board of Directors, yet I'm also one of the newest members. That's not a contradiction; I fulfilled two full terms on the Board from 2011 to 2017, then retired for a spell before returning to the Board in 2019.

My long association with LN dates back much further than 2011 though. Twenty years ago, I served on the LN Advisory Board. I was recruited for the cause originally due to the connection between literacy and employment.

I served as the long-time Director of the U.S. Department of Labor office for Long Island. My division (Wage and Hour), enforces labor laws on behalf of workers who are not paid properly, or sometimes not at all. These vulnerable workers, many of whom are recent immigrants, often don't know their rights. As a result, they are commonly exploited and marginalized, coerced and threatened not to complain or assert any labor law rights. These are the same people and groups who are very often the students and clients of Literacy Nassau: our "mutual constituents."

Part of what makes these workers (and many students) vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace is their lack of literacy

skills. If they can't read, they'll have a hard time getting any job. Those who do get jobs will likely not be aware that the labor law poster on the employer's wall has information on the minimum wage, the fact that they must be paid for all hours worked, or that safety hazards are illegal. Many can't decipher a pay stub, if they're even given one, much less read an employee handbook. In short, there is a definitive connection between literacy and employment dynamics. It's well known that for adults who cannot read, unemployment is upwards of ten times higher than their literate counterparts. And any jobs they can get are usually the most low-paying, difficult, and transitory. When you can't read, employment is tentative, at best. This undeniable connection between literacy and workplace opportunities is one big reason I've been involved with Literacy Nassau for over two decades.

However, there's a second reason for my commitment to the Literacy Nassau mission: it honors my own family's legacy. My parents were immigrants. They were Holocaust survivors, who arrived in New York jobless, unable to speak or read English. They were helped by social service organizations that housed and counseled them. They both worked in garment sweatshops (continued on p. 3)

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

How is it November already? Where does the time go? It feels like only yesterday I was away in Connecticut at my first residency for my Master's program. Since then, I have been working tirelessly on my novel. I'm almost done with the first draft! While it is exciting to see one's own work come to fruition, there is much to be said about the journey. I have thoroughly enjoyed the work I've been assigned this semester; it has been simply fascinating learning techniques and strategies for writing fiction. If asked what I am most thankful for during the oncoming season of gratitude, I would have to say how much I appreciate the opportunity to go back to school and learn a new craft. I wonder if our students are as excited about their own journeys as I am about mine. I hope so. It's exhilarating!

I hope you have time this Thanksgiving to reflect on the things and people in your life for which you are grateful. I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving!

Karen 😊



The fall season brings a cacophony of colors, a blur of activity, and a myriad of reasons to be grateful.





STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: ALUCHA CHARLES

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

Alucha is a 7th grade student in our Orton Gillingham tutoring program. She began attending this summer and will continue coming twice a week after school throughout the school year. She works very hard and is very interested in learning letter/sound associations and spelling rules that she never knew before. She is focused right now on learning syllable division patterns that will help her to read longer words.

Alucha lives with her parents and three younger siblings, ages 7, 2, and 6 months. She enjoys spending time with her large extended family, caring for her younger siblings, and listening to audiobooks and watching movies about vampires and drama. She speaks English, Creole, and some French. In order to get to know Alucha better, we conducted this interview.

Q: What are some things you like to do?

A: I like listening to music, singing, dancing, and acting. I say the lines from movies; I watch the movie and then replay my favorite parts.

Q: What do you want to be when you grow up?

A: A singer, an actress, a pediatrician, a lawyer, or a judge. I really want to be a singer or an actress but I get stage fright so I need some back-ups.

Q: How long have you been coming to Literacy Nassau and how did you find out about it?

A: This is my second month and my Mom brought me because she works in the same building and heard about the tutoring here.

Q: What kind of activities do you do at Literacy Nassau?

A: Reading, word sounding, word games, and matching games.

Q: What do you like most about reading?

A: Stories, when it gets "drama-ey," you pretend to be the character; you have a connection with the characters. It's so much better than the movie!

Q: Has your reading gotten better since you started coming here?

A: Yes, now I know the words. Before, I had a whole process of reading for school. First I listened to the audiobook, then I tried to read it, then I listened to the audiobook again, then I did the assignment. Now I can just read it by myself and understand it.

Q: What was the hardest thing you've learned here?

A: The alphabet cards when the middle letter is left out.

Q: What advice would you give to new students coming to Literacy Nassau?

A: Well, you start from step 1- if you missed anything over the years, you will get it. You get a binder that is very helpful. When you finish at Literacy Nassau, you will be able to take the binder home and use it to help you with anything you forget for your school work. Also, it's fun and you play word games and try to remember the alphabet.

Q: What advice do you have for new tutors at Literacy Nassau?

A: You need a lot of charts, like for SOS and COPS. You need a board and a lot of flash cards- get a new deck of cards!

Q: How is what you do at Literacy Nassau different from school?

A: Here it's one on one; you can ask any questions you want. School starts at your grade level, not the beginning. If you missed anything-that's not their fault-they would say. Also, at Literacy Nassau, there's no one else to answer the questions except for you and you can ask questions too. In school, you raise your hand, but you don't get called on unless you're the teacher's favorite.



Alucha with her OG tutor Kate Quijano

DONATION OF DECODABLES

(submitted by Kim Nau)

We received a generous donation of decodable books from author, Pamela Brookes. Decodable books contain concepts that the student has already learned. Children with dyslexia need to be taught the rules and phonetic code of the language. It only makes sense that they have books to read that support this Orton Gillingham-based approach.

Brookes initially created Dog on a Log Books for her daughter who has dyslexia. She wanted her to be able to read independently and develop a love for reading instead of the typical frustration that she would experience. These engaging chapter books are a "must have" for any struggling reader and we are grateful for her support of our program.

Please contact Kim Nau if you'd like to utilize these books with your Orton-Gillingham student.



Warm birthday wishes to the following tutors!

Susan Anton – Lorraine Bak – Patricia Ballard – Gail Bauer
 Roselyn Botkin – Erica Davis – Kathleen Dendy – Diane Dwyer
 Stefanie Edwards – Lita Friedman – Janice Haber-Horn
 Sandra Heiman – Charles Jencius – Joni Jones
 Joanne Kassnove – Susan Kimmel – Jean Lavelle
 Kathy Mahony – Karen McDonough – Deirdre McElhatton
 Mary Ann Neber – Kevin O'Keefe – Carolyn Quenon
 Teresa Rienzie – Martha Salzberg – Helen Schmidt
 Adarsh Singla – Diane Ugelow – Maryanne Williams-Pitman



OUR GURU KRUPA FOUNDATION EXTERNS

(submitted by Mihye Go, Sailing Jiang, and Carla Pascucci)



My name is **Mihye Go** and I'm doing an externship at WL Concepts & Production, Inc. WL Concepts & Production, Inc., which is a well-known Signage Design & Graphics company. They provide their clients with engineering and mechanical capabilities to design and produce projects. Also, they provide a custom signage, custom POP displays, laser cutting, etching, and engraving, etc. They design logos, custom banners, plaques, and awards. They work to give signage for many retailers such as Tommy Hilfiger, Jones New York, and Anne Klein. We can see their products anywhere. For example, when you visit a hospital, you need wall signs to find places you have to go and when you visit any museum, you can enjoy visualized wall displays that they designed. On March 2020, a Navy Seal Museum will be opened in Long Island that was designed and displayed all around by them.

Doing externship there, I have been experiencing with various and valuable things. More specifically, I have been learning how they process their clients' order and how they design and make products for them. All the employees kindly spent time with me explaining what they are doing for the company and how they manage customer relationship to maximize their clients' satisfaction, so I can understand easily how they are working with their clients to satisfy their needs. In addition, they described how they do budgeting and expense control. They explained the principle of book-keeping for the company and how they handle expense management, reimbursement, and so on.

As a student learning English, WL Concepts offers me a great experience.



My name is **Sailing Jiang** and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with the EOC of Nassau Country Head Start Program. Despite my language challenge, the EOC has warmly welcomed me, giving me the opportunity to learn English and gain valuable experience through Head Start. Head Start offers a variety of services to pre-school children, ages 3-5 years old. Preschool education is the most important education that a child receives in his or her life. I was so excited to start my classroom experience on September 16, 2019 at the Eastern Nassau site in Wantagh, New York.

Thank you Literacy Nassau for setting up this project. This project was great at helping some people who are not good at English and looking for work difficulties. Thanks to everyone who helped me.

My name is **Carla Pascucci** and I have been enjoying working in the Westbury Library. I am learning a lot in this internship with my co-workers and Mrs. Edna.

I'm working with Mrs. Edna by helping with the Spanish community and searching for our community. My job is to find people for programs the community. Some examples of the programs are nutrition classes, self-defense classes and dance classes. These are just some of the programs that I have accomplished so far.



Carla Pascucci pictured in the center with her work colleagues at the Westbury Library.

LITERACY AND EMPLOYMENT (CONT'D.)

(continued from cover page)

for decades, and were part of that vulnerable workforce. But they also learned to speak, read and write English by going to night school. Later, they went on to become United States citizens.

I have a vivid early "literacy" memory of my mother. When I was six years old, I sat at the kitchen table at night while my mother practiced her reading from a book that was not much different from my own first grade reader. We read to each other; it was an interesting mother-to-young-child dynamic. We'd then move on to our respective civics lessons, with mom's lessons being a prelude to her citizenship exam. I remember "helping" her study for her citizenship exam. I'd ask her, "Mommy, who was the first president of the United States?" She proudly answered in her Yiddish accent, "Yorge Vashing-tone!" I laughed and clapped, and quizzed her some more, until my father came home, and the chicken soup was served.

I cannot help but also remember my son's legacy, as he was a devoted immigrant advocate in his own work and life. My son, David, grew up hearing stories of his family's history, and became drawn to social justice advocacy, ultimately choosing to work for the Department of Labor as well (on the west coast). He resolved numerous cases on behalf of vulnerable, low wage workers, and though his journey ended abruptly in 2016, he, too, left a legacy.

I imagine many adult students of Literacy Nassau practicing their reading at a small kitchen table, juggling work demands, taking care of children, and seeking their own paths to citizenship and a decent life. Their children and grandchildren take note of their hard work, and many may grow up to advocate for the kinds of opportunities that made their own lives in America possible. But it all begins with literacy. Being able to read and write improves lives in numerous concrete ways: occupationally, financially, socially, and otherwise. It also provides a priceless lifelong gift of self-awareness that uplifts the individual and our society.

I have been immensely inspired when I've read the simple stories in the "Open Door" anthology written by Literacy Nassau students, whose enthusiasm in simply being able to write and read about their own lives and families is the epitome of the human spirit, and it's capacity for gratitude and hope. That is why I continue to be involved with Literacy Nassau.



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**THANK YOU TO ALL
WHO ATTENDED
LITERACY NASSAU'S
DAY OF BRIDGE!
CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE WINNERS AT THIS
SOLD OUT EVENT.**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO:
THE JOHN AND JANET
KORNREICH CHARITABLE
FOUNDATION**

**SHARYN ESPOSITO AND
THE STAFF AT THE
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION AT
SHELTER ROCK**

AARON SILVERSTEIN

ESTEE LAUDER



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