



LITERACY MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2016

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



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Our Staff Team

Karen Micciche, Executive Director
 Renae Katz, Bookkeeper
 Kim Nau, Program Director
 Alison Orme, Vol. Recruitment/Retention
 Umama Pasha, Program Director
 Ocaria DiMango, Program Director
 Digna Johnson, LN-OC Lead Teacher
 Cindy Cabrera, LN-OC Teacher/Lit. Spec.
 Candice Cantore, Americorps VISTA
 Sara Izquierdo, Jr. Literacy Specialist
 Rebecca Figueras, Jr. Literacy Specialist

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THE FUTURE OF BASIC LITERACY

(submitted by Umama Pasha)

As many of you know, we are embarking on some major changes in our basic literacy program. The basic literacy program is for our native-English speakers, and focuses on skills needed to become successful readers. Our staff team is currently preparing to go through a 7-year transition to become an accredited affiliate of the Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. The purpose of this intense period of staff training and practicum is to serve our Basic Learners to the absolute best of our ability.

When Literacy Volunteers began as a movement back in the 1960's, the Basic Learners who were being served as students were mostly uneducated as children. Many of them lived in areas where segregation precluded them from having access to education. Some of them had to work as children, so school was not an option. Nowadays, that is not the case, and as a result, our Basic Learners are far fewer in number. However, almost all of them struggle with an undiagnosed learning disability. Literacy Nassau's \$1 million grant from the John and Janet Kornreich Foundation is going to change the way we serve this population of individuals moving forward. One of the steps I

took to be part of that change was attending a 2-day Train-the-Trainer workshop through Literacy New York on August 8-9th. The workshop was about informally assessing your learner in phonics and providing learning strategies for tutors to help improve this fundamental component to reading.

I was very excited to be able to participate in this workshop because it allows me to become a trainer through the Long Island Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN). I can now provide this workshop for educators who can use these hands-on approaches to help their adult learners understand phonics, which focuses on letter to sound and sound to letter awareness and fluency to help learners read words and sentences.

The training is based on Orton Gillingham best practices, and will be used internally for our tutors as an In-Service Training as well as a new component to our BL Tutor Training Workshop. The content includes a language assessment inventory that identifies a learner's areas of weaknesses and strategies to help you fill in the holes that they have in their reading.

We plan to roll this training out over the next few months. It will be the first in a long series of changes we plan to make to ensure tutor and student success for our BL population.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

The summer flew by! Now, as we transition back to "real life," our kids return to school and we return to work, energized and recharged!

We have some really exciting new additions to our staff team (see page 4) and to welcome the new folks aboard, I organized an overnight camping trip at the end of August. Camping offers many natural team-building opportunities, like putting up a tent or building a fire. I took the opportunity to give my Program Directors the chance to shine, so each one created their own team-building activity for our group to participate in. Kim came up with a photo scavenger hunt, where teams earned points by taking pictures of participants competing in activities. Ocaria brought Can Jam and Heads Up, two great games which are played in teams, and Umama led us all in morning yoga at the beach. It was a great way for everyone to work together and build upon each other's strengths towards a common goal!

Our staff team is approaching this new school year with a great amount of fresh energy and vision! We are all very excited to work with you towards our common goal of eradicating illiteracy on Long Island!

Kim



For Kim's photo scavenger hunt, each team had to take a picture of someone doing a handstand. I haven't done one in years! (Didn't know I still had it in me!)



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: NIA OBARA

(submitted by Ocaria DiMango)

Antonia "Nia" Obara has been a great asset to Literacy Nassau! She has explored three of Literacy Nassau's amazing ELL programs – one to one tutoring, SGIB, and this summer, SGI - and she loves them all!

Nia grew up on Long Island. She attained her Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics from Stony Brook University and decided she wanted to pursue teaching language. She then pursued her Master's Degree in TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language). Nia believes that learning additional languages is extremely beneficial, because it provides the ability to develop a more holistic view of the world through the universal connector of communication. As she approaches the end of her TESOL certification, she attests that the experiences she has had have shaped her as a person.

Nia joined Literacy Nassau because she wanted to work more with adults, having only worked with children in elementary and middle school during her student teaching. She discovered that she likes working more with adults because they want to be there. Children's communication skills are limited because their cognitive and intellectual capacities are still developing. Adults have the benefit of the shared context of life experience. Although beginners are a little harder to communicate with, pictures and gestures are greatly helpful in getting your point across, and because concepts are already familiar to adults in their first language, it's not like teaching to a blank slate.

Describing each program and its benefits, Nia says one-on-one tutoring is good because you meet individual needs and work at the pace of your student. With SGIB, she loved the camaraderie and how students learn to act in a classroom environment. They develop more class skills, speak and listen more and learn the pace at which people speak and interact. Working with intermediate ELL learners in SGI, Nia had the opportunity to teach vocabulary and more of the nuances of idioms and personal interactions. She also got to build more critical thinking skills like comparing and contrasting cultural experiences with her intermediate learners.

When working with your student, Nia's tips are don't stress, change things up if they're not working, and meet the students where they are. When I thanked her for her service, she shared, "I've gained so much experience at Literacy Nassau! I wouldn't be here if I didn't love it!"



Pictured above,
Nia Obara.



Above is a photo from the Jot It Down club on Saturday mornings at the East Meadow Library with volunteer facilitator, Patty Rossi.

JOT IT DOWN

(submitted by Kim Nau)

This October marks one year since we launched Next Chapter Book Clubs. The clubs have been very successful and we now have more than 15 clubs, 28 facilitators, and 70 members meeting in bookstores, cafes, and libraries across Nassau and Suffolk counties.

In March 2016, we piloted Jot It Down at the East Meadow Library. Jot It Down is a community-based creative writing club for adults with disabilities. It's an off-shoot of Next Chapter Book Clubs and both programs were originally developed at Ohio State University. Jot It Down is similar to the Next Chapter Book Club model; the club promotes social connectedness, community inclusion, and literacy.

Our volunteer facilitator, Patricia Rossi, would like to share her experience facilitating a Jot It Down club:

Every Saturday morning I welcome a new weekend by lacing up my sneakers and heading out the door for a long run. As I run through local streets, logging miles and dodging the inevitable car in search of a garage sale, I think about the weekend ahead. There will be errands, family obligations and social outings. But however the weekend unfolds, I happily look forward to 11 am each and every Saturday morning at the East Meadow Library for the "Jot it Down Writing Club." It is truly my pleasure and honor to facilitate this writing club. The club is grateful to Literacy Nassau for implementing this program.

Each weekly session proves to be a wonderful experience, as we gather together with pen and notebook in hand, explore the art of writing, the use of words and proper grammar. In the midst of writing prompts and sharing our written words aloud, we have learned about one another, our lives and our families. For certain we have gained an appreciation for each other and have realized that each of us possesses a unique writing style. We have shared laughs, assisted one another with ideas, difficult words and helped each other with spelling.

It is my intention and hope that the weekly meetings demonstrate to the "Jot it Down" club members that each of them is indeed a writer, each possesses an inner creative voice that deserves to be heard. My writers are certainly talented. I admire their fortitude, their creativity and their determination displayed week after week.

Jot It Down allows members to express themselves in a variety of genres, make new friends, and enjoy community life. Members meet weekly to write short stories, letters, lists, poems, and emails using tablets, laptops, pen, paper, and other tools. Jot It Down members improve their literacy skills, enjoy a creative outlet, make friends, take part in the community, and have a lot of fun doing it!

Volunteer facilitators are provided with a packet of writing activities and motivational prompts and are supported every step of the way. If you are interested in volunteering one hour a week to co-facilitate a Jot It Down writing club, please go online to register for the Next Chapter Book Club/Jot It Down training workshop: www.literacynassau.org/ttw.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in September!

Sam Antar	Michelle Berman	Adrienne Brosseau	Joan Calarco	Helen Capece
Lisa Chieco	Janice Collins	Carol Cook	Peggy Dublin	Rhea Epstein
Sylvia Essman	Leslie Feinberg	Betsy Funch	Laura Garcia	Freya Grice
Elinor Haber	Avra Hammerschlag	Donald Hayde	Susan Higney	Amy Karofsky
Alison Kohler	Margaret Latronica	Kathy Leibowitz	Marie Levy	Maxene Liverpool
Marie Marsac	Karen Meredith	Lois Miceli	Andrew Mihopoulos	Joseph Mogavero
Paul Nelson	Judy O'Connell	Karla Padawer	Gloria Petitto	Rona Rappe
Marcy Ruggiero	Arlyne Skolnik	Blanche Tyrkko	Maria Vivona	Janine Washinger
Loretta White	Linda White	Colleen Woodell		

LITERACY NASSAU PROUDLY PRESENTS: A DAY OF BRIDGE!

Date: Friday, September 23, 2016

Time: 9:00 am to 2:30 pm

**Location: UUCSR: Unitarian Universalist
Congregation at Shelter Rock
48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset, NY**

**Enjoy: Continental Breakfast
1/2 Hour Lesson with Aaron Silverstein of
The Bridge School of Long Island
3 Hours of Duplicate Bridge
Catered Lunch from Ben's Deli
Goody Bags and Fabulous Raffle Prizes!**

**Play to Win: A night on Broadway! Two tickets to any
performance of *Fiddler on the Roof* (before
12/31/16) and a \$100 gift card to Bobby
Flay's *Bar Americain* in NYC.**

**Price: \$50 per individual player
\$180 if registering a foursome
Price includes a sheet of 25 raffle tickets!**

All proceeds will benefit Literacy Nassau, a local non-profit that utilizes volunteers to teach illiterate adults how to read, write, and speak English. Your ticket is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

To register for A Day of Bridge, complete the form below and return with a check made payable to Literacy Nassau in the enclosed envelope. To register via e-mail, please scan this form and e-mail it to kmicciche@literacynassau.org.

Name: _____

If you are registering for a foursome, please list players here:

Address: _____

1) _____ 2) _____
3) _____ 4) _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

To pay by credit card, please provide the following:

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Card Number: _____

Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Name on Card: _____

I am registering for (circle one): myself a foursome

Billing Address: _____



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WELCOME JR. LITERACY SPECIALISTS!

Literacy Nassau has grown so significantly over the past two years that it is necessary for us to expand our workforce! With great pleasure, we introduce our two newest Junior Literacy Specialists, Sara Izquierdo (pictured below, left) and Rebecca Figueras (pictured below, right)! Both Sara and Rebecca come to us "from within," as both have been tutoring with us for over a year. Sara has worked as a one-to-one tutor and in Saturday Extra Help for our Office for New Americans program. Rebecca has worked as a one-to-one tutor, an SGB instructor, and is currently running a Next Chapter Book Club group! Their commitment and dedication as volunteers made them fabulous candidates for employment here at Literacy Nassau - but that was leveraged by their educational backgrounds and personal experiences as well.

Sara's background is in Geology and Natural Resource Conservation. She got her Bachelor's Degree from Boston College and her Master's degree from UMass-Amherst, and spent 9 years in the field before taking a break to start a family. In preparation for her return to work, Sara decided to find a meaningful volunteer activity, and she started with Literacy Nassau in February, 2015. She became so enamored with the work of teaching English to adult students that she decided to pursue a second Master's degree in TESOL, this time from Hofstra University. Sara's commitment to our students was honored at Recognition Night in May, when she was selected for the "ONA Tutor of the Year" award, one she was not able to accept in person because it was her first night of school!

You may remember the name Rebecca Figueras from our January 2016 issue of Literacy Matters, where she was featured in our "Tutor Spotlight" article. Rebecca has been tutoring with us for two years, crossing over into 3 of our programs. She brings her passion for basic learners and individuals with special needs to her work as a Master's candidate in Special Education and Literacy at Hofstra University. Rebecca previously worked at Barnes and Noble. Her love of books and reading led her to share (at her interview) that working for Literacy Nassau is actually her dream job.

It's a dream for us to have both Sara and Rebecca on staff as we continue to grow our program in deeper and more meaningful ways! Welcome ladies!



CONGRATULATIONS!

The relaxed feeling of summer didn't stop the following people from doing something meaningful with their time! Congratulations, and welcome, to our newest volunteer tutors!

Barbara Broder
Janice Collins
Louann Cronin
Barbara DiPalmo
Sheryll Dorf
Erick Gordy
Suzie Gregorovius
Austin Khorasanchi
Arlene Lipton
Nicole Maas
Megan McCarthy
Kerrin Morello
Mary Ellen Nardiello
Celiann Neber
Susan Risberg
Philip Ronkin
Monique Thomas
Amanda Varrone
Lisa Walters