

LITERACY MATTERS

DECEMBER 2016

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



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NATURALIZE NEW YORK

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

For many New York green card holders, the \$680 fee to become a U.S. citizen is simply too much to bear. While there are fee waivers for those living below 150% of the federal poverty level, there are millions of immigrants who can be classified as "working poor," for whom those waivers do not apply. We see these individuals every month at our Citizenship Drives, and it is very disheartening to tell them that they will have to save the money.

That's why we were so excited when we learned about the Naturalize NY lottery. A research project out of Stanford University that has partnered with the NYS Office for New Americans, the lottery defrays the cost of the application fee for its winners. The first drawing took place on September 24th, and on October 19th, Ocaria, Umama, and I had the great fortune to prepare applications for the 18 winners assigned to Literacy Nassau's Opportunity Center.

One of the women I met with, Claudia Contreras, kept saying, "You don't understand. You could not know what this means to me." She went on to share a story about how her mother recently suffered a stroke in her home country of El Salvador, and that by becoming a citizen, Claudia will be able to bring her mother to the United States. "My mom has never met her grandchildren," she shared, "and I believe that they will bring her

joy that will add many years to her life."

I also met with Victoria Benitez, a 71 year old woman who brought me a gift: a photograph on the Twin Towers that her husband took on September 10, 2001. Her husband, Joseph, passed away in 2012 and Victoria was convicted that he would want me to have that photograph. "We were all Americans on 9/11; Even though I was only a green card holder, I was an American that day. My husband would want you to have that picture because you are helping me to realize my dream of becoming a citizen of this beautiful country." Victoria explained that she has been a permanent resident since 1993, and never became a citizen because her family just didn't have the money to spare.

A younger lottery winner, Junior Marmol, was just stunned to have won something. "I won the lottery!" he exclaimed. "This is a gift that will last a lifetime. I am so happy that I will not have to pay. I have worked so hard for my money." Marmol is a painter by trade who has been unemployed for the past several weeks. He smiled throughout the entire application process.



Pictured left,
I worked with
Claudia to
complete the
lengthy N-400
application.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

November has been a crazy month. I was out of the office in Connecticut for Orton Gillingham training for 3 consecutive weeks, we had a crazy presidential election, I had a workload that made my desk unbearable to look at, and of course, there's the planning, shopping, and cooking for Thanksgiving to worry about. In the midst of all of this, on November 17th, my baby Julianne is turning 3 years old.

I'm sitting at my desk at 7pm on a Thursday typing this article out, and as I write this, I am missing my kids' bedtime. It really makes you stop and think. What are the important things in life? As we approach the holiday season, I challenge you to see beyond the manic insanity we face every December. Stop. Put down your phone. Take a look at your beautiful grandkids, or your children (whether little or grown up), or your spouse, or a good friend, or even your student. Appreciate the good things in your life. All of the busy-ness is just a means to an end, but if you miss the "end," then you're completely missing the point. Get up and go home. Like I'm going to do right now.

Karen



It's hard to believe
my little Julie is turning
3. I need to slow
down and pay attention,
or before I know it, she'll be turning 30.

WELCOME SHASHI!

(submitted by Alison Orme)

Welcome to Shashi Sonika! Shashi will be joining the team at Literacy Nassau in January as part of our new student internship program. Developed in partnership with the Guru Krupa Foundation, paid student internships such as Shashi's will provide real work experience to select students in our advanced ESOL program. Shashi is our first intern in this program and will be helping out with administrative duties in our Freeport office for the next four months.

Shashi graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from the University of Rajshan in Jaipur, India and was a member of Literacy Nassau's first graduating class in May 2016. Her husband's work in NYC brought Shashi and their two kids here for a few months for several consecutive years so when a full-time work opportunity came up for him at the end of 2013, they decided to come to Long Island.

While Shashi misses celebrating festivals such as October's Diwali with her family and friends in India, she is making new friends here on Long Island. Shashi has been volunteering with Literacy Nassau for the past few months, and is looking forward to working in an office environment and learning more about non-profits through her internship.

In the words of Literacy Nassau's Cindy Cabrera, Shashi's ESOL Teacher: "Shashi entered into my classroom with much anticipation to learn. She has demonstrated motivation, a strong sense of teamwork and perseverance throughout her learning journey. When the opportunity came up to volunteer with us, Shashi quickly jumped on it and joined our office here in Freeport. Eight months later, Shashi was selected to participate in our internship program which she highly deserves. Congratulations Shashi! You are my student prodigy!"

Please join Cindy and the rest of the Literacy Nassau team in welcoming Shashi and wishing her the best of luck in this new role!



Above left: Umama poses with Shashi Sonika at Recognition Night 2016.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in December:

Anita Achkhanian	Nickie Bernhardt	Marie Catalano-Gruen
Fran Dowling	Arline Ellison	Lauri Englert-Sacco
Judy & Leonard Feldman	Helene Fleisig	Lawrence Fong
Patricia Goldberg	Kathleen Gyves	Georgene Harrison
Georgine Hartenfels	Maryann Harvey	Nancy Keegan
Austin Khorasanchi	Paul Konigstein	Lynda Lax
Leslie Leber	Janice Mazzari	Susan Molinelli
Salvatore Morici	Kathie Novak	Robert Palleschi
Saumil Patel	Amanda Persico	Sue Rachell
Valquiria Soares-Cruz	Barbara Spun	Lisa Valencia

CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to all of our newest tutors:

Irene Baydarian
Valerie Diamond
Margaret Elliott
Sheila Frank
Carol Kessler
MaryLou Laurie
Alexandra Leung
MaryLou Laurie
Linda Podhurst
Pat Regan
Gene Sanders
Patricia Searby
Cynthia Spiletic
Mary Jane Tufano
Sandra Villatoro
Ernestine Warner

Do You Have a Friend Who Might be Interested in Becoming a Volunteer Adult Literacy Tutor?

The team at Literacy Nassau wants to thank you for your hard work and dedication to our mission of improving adult literacy in Nassau County. As a current tutor, when you refer a friend who completes one of our Tutor Training Workshops, you will receive a \$10 gift card of your choice.

Contact Alison Orme at (516) 867-3580 x21 for details.



CREATIVE WAYS TO GIVE THIS SEASON

GIVE FOR EVERYDAY NEEDS
\$10 for a book for a book club.
\$35 for an SGI resource box.
\$50 for 10 copies of *Open Door*.
\$100 to invite 4 students to Recognition Night.

GIFT A VACATION
Sharing your unused timeshare or vacation home can make a great raffle prize for a fundraiser.

REGIFT
Your new and unused gifts or gift cards for raffle prizes at one of our annual fundraisers.

LEAVE A LEGACY
Make a bequest to Literacy Nassau by contacting your attorney or call Karen Micciche for details at (516) 867-3580 x11.

TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: JANICE COLLINS

(submitted by Alison Orme)

Janice Collins is a tutor who started five years ago shortly after she saw a Newsday article on Literacy Nassau and the need for volunteer tutors. She is a New York City Department of Education teacher who is currently working with special needs children. She has always loved language and understanding how people acquire it, which is one of the reasons that she chose to work with an English Language Learner when she decided to volunteer with Literacy Nassau.

In her words:

"I worked with my individual student for four years. She has become family to me. She comes from Honduras and started her life here at 19 years old. At that time, she did not have any family here in the U.S. She is now married with three children and has a small business going. Her dream is to obtain her high school equivalency diploma.

This summer, when Ocaria encouraged the two of us to split up as a tutoring pair, I knew it was best for her to move on with the program. I knew too that it was best for me to try something new so I decided to attend an SGI training workshop. I started with a new group in October and have been enjoying the experience. As a

teacher, I like the idea of a small group classroom format. The students in the group learn from each other. My students have a lot in common and are very motivated to learn. All of my students are native Spanish-speakers; some are from South America and some from Latin America. While they share a common language, I love to hear about the different cultures and their experience growing up in another country. They sometimes speak in Spanish to each other, but I will interrupt and say, "English", then they laugh and switch back. The small group environment encourages them to speak up and to practice their spoken English. I incorporate technology into my sessions. I am excited to learn more about the use of technology to learn language at Literacy Nassau's Tutor Conference this November. Despite the fact that I miss my one-to-one sessions with my first student, I know that she is happy to be continuing with Literacy Nassau and is as motivated as ever to achieve her goals in life. I am so happy to be a part of her life."

Two years ago, I traveled to Europe with my 25 year old daughter and got a taste of what it is like to not speak the local language. We went for several weeks and first traveled to Italy and Spain. We got along okay in those countries because of

some rudimentary language skills. When we traveled to France, however, I was completely lost. I could look up a phrase or question in a travel book or on Google translate, but I was not able to understand the response. We relied heavily on T.P.R. (Total Physical Response) the use of body language, gestures, facial expressions and a lot of pointing. Travel is always an education. I learned how difficult it can be to try to understand someone, and I also learned to appreciate the daily struggle of navigating the unknown and unfamiliar, just like non-English speakers experience on a daily basis living in the United States.

My experience volunteering with the SGI program at Literacy Nassau has been wonderful. There is never enough time in the classroom because students are so actively engaged and eager to learn about everything! We discuss all topics, from family, food and friendships to people, politics and policies. I take great pride in being a volunteer for Literacy Nassau because it does so much more than teach English. There are no words in any language to describe what this experience has done for me."



During this season of giving, we wanted to recognize several organizations whose recent gifts help make possible Literacy Nassau's dream of improving adult literacy and language on Long Island. Our sincere thank you to these generous donors!

The **Guru Krupa Foundation** (featured in our October 2016 newsletter) serves the Long Island community and beyond through its social, cultural, and educational programs. Their recent grant of \$35,000 is enabling us to create an internship program for our ONA graduates. This competitive program will give 10 students the opportunity to become paid office interns and gain valuable work experience in America, as well as on-the-job training in resume building, the job search, and

career coaching. Through this groundbreaking effort, we will also be able to assist candidates with applications for work permits in the United States through USCIS. Many, many thanks to the Guru Krupa Foundation for helping Literacy Nassau bridge the gap for ESOL students, helping them to become employable members of society once they have developed their English skills.

The mission of **People's United Community Foundation** is to invest in programs and services that enhance the quality of life for residents, promote the economic development and well-being of neighborhoods and support the educational and developmental needs of children and youth, with special emphasis given to programs and services in low income areas. Their recent grant of \$2,500 will enable us to launch one new Next Chapter Book Club location for a year. PUCF has been supporting Literacy Nassau for the past several years, and we are truly grateful for their partnership!

The **TD Charitable Foundation** provides program support in the areas of affordable housing, financial literacy and education, and the environment, particularly for economically vulnerable individuals, families and communities. They also have a very unique grants program through their Non-Profit Training Fund, whereby non-profit organizations can apply for up to \$1,000 to help them train staff. Their recent grant of \$1,000 helped us offset the training costs for our recent Orton Gillingham training. Thank you TD!

The **Tommy Brull Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) charity whose mission is to raise money to benefit people and organizations dedicated to serving those with physical, mental, and emotional challenges in Nassau and Suffolk counties. They are planning to sponsor one of our South Shore Next Chapter Book Club locations with a grant of \$2,250. We look forward to this new collaboration! Thank you!



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LET'S PLAY!

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

Games are a great way to reinforce information you've gone over with your student. Below are some suggestions you may use during your group or one-to-one tutoring sessions.

Bingo

Teach student vocabulary based on the holidays. Then use those vocabulary words to play a nice game of Bingo. This is a great way to reinforce new vocabulary.
 * Use basic Bingo board
 * From the list of words the students are required to learn they select 9 (or 24).
 * Make sure to call Bingo two or three times until everyone knows their card.
 * Call out the words. Students with those words must shout them out. Only the first one to shout gets to cover the square.
 * Adapt the game for a one-to-one student by playing against each other, alternating who selects the word each time.

*Below is a link to a Holiday Bingo Chart:
<http://www.elcivics.com/christmas-bingo-game.pdf>*

Hang-Snowman

To review holiday vocabulary, Hang-Snowman is a fun tool to utilize with your student(s).
 * Create a box or bag of flashcards. Have your student choose a flash card from the box or bag.
 * Then the student must count the letters from the word or phrase and place the same amount of lines on the board or a piece of paper.

* In a group setting, classmates will take turns shouting out letters to guess the word. Each time a letter is not in the word, the student at the front will draw a picture of the snowman.
 * In a one-to-one setting, you can facilitate the game. Once your student feels comfortable playing, go ahead and let the student take the lead.

Whispering Game

Divide the class into two teams. Line up the players. The teacher whispers a message to the first person of both group A and group B. Create messages that relate to the holiday season. The game only starts

when both players know the message. Then each player whispers the message to the next player in his group successively until the last player gets the message. The team that can correctly repeat the message first receives a point. Start the game over with the second student of each group becoming the first one in line.

True or False

Come up with 10 facts about the holidays. From those facts make 5 of them false. Have your students take out a sheet of paper and number them 1-10. Explain to your student(s) that you will be reading ten facts and that some of them are false. They must figure which ones are True/or False. If false, have your student(s) try to correct them. In a group setting, the student with the highest and most accurate information wins the game.

For more ideas on different games visit:
<http://iteslj.org/games/>
 Enjoy your holidays!