



# LITERACY MATTERS

JANUARY 2017

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



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## WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?

(submitted by Alison Orme, contributing writer)

When asked what they would like their legacy to be, I think many people immediately bring up their family. Certainly, family is a noble legacy, and even raising a child to the age of eighteen without actually wanting to disown them in their teenage years is considered a feat by many (these are the jokes, folks!). But often we are completely unknown to the third generation. Can you still remember all of your great-grandparents' names? I know I do not remember them all although I am not sure if I ever knew all of them.

But I do remember stories about a great-grandmother who as a young widow came to the U.S. with her 11-year old son shortly before WWI. And I know that some piece of her lives on in the personality traits and values that she inspired in her daughter-in-law (my grandmother) who volunteered several days a week for a local thrift shop, her grandson (my dad) who gave of his time in retirement to help out at the local hospital where my mom, one of my brothers and I had worked many years earlier, and her great grandson (my brother) and his wife who have given generously to and selflessly served their community for over thirty-five years.

These are the role models upon whom I reflect when I think about what I want my legacy to be and the behavior that I want to model for the next generation.

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

At the beginning of every school year, we convene at my children's school to meet the faculty and hear ideas and information for the year ahead. One extremely poignant thing the teachers do is to light a candle and make a wish for the class for that year. The wish is always the same. "May we, as a faculty, be worthy of your children's imitation."

What a profound idea. It's the plight of the working mom to be endlessly on the go, always with good intentions but often to the detriment of my time with my girls. Even when I am present, I am not fully present. My mind is in a hundred different places.

This year, I will fix that once and for all. I want to be a mother my children can model after - poised, thoughtful, caring, and hard working. I think it is a fitting resolution for anyone who seeks to better the life of another. To be worthy of someone else's imitation means to be the very best version of yourself when you are in their presence. I wish this for each of you in 2017. Self-improvement is a journey for all of us, and there is much beauty to be found in the striving.

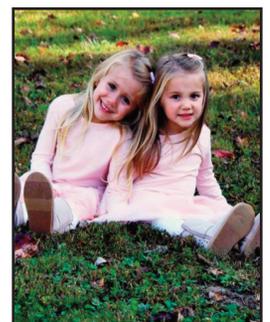
With my time in volunteer recruitment at Literacy Nassau ending in December, I asked myself what my commitment was to the organization's mission and to this team of smart, hard-working women going forward. At the same time, health issues for a few close family members have been encouraging me for months to rethink my future priorities, while keeping a laser-like focus on the present to enjoy every possible moment with them and to create memories that will last a lifetime.

So my question to you is this: What do you want your legacy to be?

What do you want to be known for? What do you want people to remember about you? For me, it boils down to two words: kindness and generosity. It was the kindness of another who helped me learn the language and culture when I lived in a foreign country years ago that influenced my decision to sign up as a volunteer tutor with Literacy Nassau in early 2011. It was also the kindness of many a former teacher who took the time to help me learn; who took an active interest in helping me to develop my ability to *(cont'd. on p.2)*



Pictured left, Alison (6th from left) poses with the team. She will be greatly missed!



2017 will be my year to master the art of balance - at least enough so that I can be worthy of my girls' imitation.

*Karen*





## YOUR LEGACY, CONT'D.

*(continued from page 1)*

continue learning, even after the relationship ended, that motivated me to continue working with my student(s).

A role model for many and a woman well-known for her life of service and generosity, Mother Teresa, once said, "What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family." This is important, but I would add that you will also want to love the person who has been placed in front of you, no matter who that person is. How can you do this when it is someone you do not know? Give of your time and volunteer to help another to learn English, learn to read or participate in a book club. Give of yourself by offering a gentle, unexpected smile to someone you meet because you never know what kind of day they are having. Give of your financial resources to support an organization whose mission you are passionate about and whose team you have the utmost confidence in. In my humble opinion, Literacy Nassau is one of those organizations. Only here can you "change the world, one word at a time," starting right in your own community. So I want to thank each and every one of you for your commitment to Literacy Nassau, for the hours you spend with your student(s) and for your generous gifts to help support the mission of improving adult literacy on Long Island. I hope to see you again (or meet you) with someone from your next generation at an upcoming Literacy Nassau fundraiser or event in the future!

For more information about how you can make a legacy gift to Literacy Nassau to support the organization in its mission to improve adult literacy on Long Island, please contact Karen Micciche at (516) 867-3580 x11 or via e-mail at [kmicciche@literacynassau.org](mailto:kmicciche@literacynassau.org).

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in January:

Melveta Anderson  
Jonathan Baker  
Dana Bergman  
Frank Dorf  
Trudy Franco  
Gladys Greene  
Mara Jacobowitz  
Emma LaPrince  
Rose Lowe  
Audrey Peltz  
Debra Phanstiel  
Barbara Phillips  
Marion Polizzi  
Honey Prager  
Dorothy Royal  
Alice Scharf  
Addy Skolnick  
Dara Sullivan  
Joyce Tobkes

Gillian Archer  
Irene Baydarian  
Susan Braun  
Connie Egelman  
Janet Gordon  
Jane Griffin  
Jan Kerr  
David Leibenhaut  
Roseann Martz

Mildred Aronson  
Aaron Becker  
Linda Burdi  
Marleen Fenton  
LaToyra Graves  
Helene Harris  
Carol Kessler  
Mary Lindquist  
Harriet Morosoff



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to all of our newest tutors:

Teresa Benedetto  
Michele Haber  
Maureen Lonergan  
Clara Padovano  
Nathalie Zephirin

Linda Bernstein  
Sylvia Jorisch  
Frances Mingoia  
Linda Silver

Carol Ciccarello  
Kathleen Kelty  
Grazia Norton  
Patricia Soltero

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE NEW YEAR

As we begin 2017, please remember the following when working with your student(s):

- 1) **Attendance hours are to be submitted on a monthly basis to your Jr. Literacy Specialist!** If you are unsure who to send them to, you can always e-mail them to [mail@literacynassau.org](mailto:mail@literacynassau.org) and we will get them to the right staff member. The New York State Education Department mandates that our data be current, and failure to report monthly attendance could place our organization into corrective action status. Thank you for your attention and cooperation with the challenging task of collecting attendance from almost 500 tutors a month!
- 2) **Post-testing for 1:1 students is now underway.** In the next few months, you should expect to hear from your Junior Literacy Specialist about post-testing your student. Please make every effort to help arrange the testing for your student. Annual testing is also a mandate of the State Education Department and directly affects our funding.



## ORTON GILLINGHAM: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

As you may know, some of the staff members attended the Orton-Gillingham training this fall in Connecticut. It has been an eye opening experience learning about this innovative, multi-sensory approach designed to address the specific needs of students who have dyslexia (one of the most common neurologically-based language learning disabilities).

This past month, four of the senior staff members, along with four dedicated volunteers, have piloted this program with some of our basic literacy students. The lessons are prescriptive and they primarily begin by studying the smallest units of sound and are reinforced with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities. The lessons progress from single sounds to words to sentences to paragraphs.

It has been fascinating to learn about the students in our program with varying backgrounds but with similar struggles. Some of the participants in the program include a forty year-old drummer who wants to get a high school equivalency diploma, a 72 year-old veteran who lacks confidence due to years of feeling inadequate, and a chef turned activist, who helps her neighbors and advocates for their basic rights, who wants to read for respect and to be able to help others more.

As we think about our basic literacy students, we have to wonder how many have suffered for years with anxiety, shame and low-self-esteem due to an undiagnosed learning disability and the impact it has on them, academically, emotionally, and financially.

Our experiences with these learners have been enlightening to say the least. Here are a few thoughts from Ocaria and Umama: Umama: For me, the Orton-Gillingham experience has filled my heart. To be part of a program that will change lives in such a meaningful way is amazing and to revolutionize the way non-profit adult education programs provide services is a great challenge.

Since the start of the training, it has been amazing to learn and understand how to work with people who have learning disabilities. We learned so much information such as the history of language as well as the rules of English (there are so many!) in order to help teach these concepts to our learners. Our heads would be spinning by the end of each training day, and I was very anxious to get started with my student to apply all that I had learned. We officially started working together this week.

So far, we have been having a great time. My learner is a professional drummer and also works on remodeling floors at different businesses. He is a very hand-on, personable man who wants to take the test to receive his H.S Diploma. His reading level is 4th grade, but we have seen in his assessment that he needs a better understanding of the sounds of the English alphabet even though he knows the letters. He is not able to tell me the sounds that every letter makes and does not know all the rules of the language.

In the two sessions we've met, we have such a fun time together, cracking jokes and learning more about each other but also making sure we get work done. One of the challenges I am already seeing is the impact that living with an undiagnosed learning disability has had on him. He is the most friendly and sociable person but when speaking with him one-on-one, he has expressed how humiliating and dumb he has felt. On our first day, the first thing I did was talk about his goal of obtaining his H.S diploma. We then wrote it in his binder to keep him motivated. I also told him to ignore all those negative thoughts his mind tells him, and we talked about how intellect is not measured by reading only; there are so many types of intellect and just because he cannot read well does not mean that he is dumb. We have been taking each session one day at a time.

Ocaria: Being a part of the Orton-Gillingham program has been so exciting. It has been a challenging yet fun experience. I am in training to be a Classroom Educator which will enable me to teach multiple students in our program. This is especially rewarding for me as I have seen firsthand how the Small Group Instruction program greatly enhanced Literacy Nassau's services to our English Language Learners and

provided a safe, engaging learning environment for them. Group instruction for adult learners in our Basic Literacy program may be a little tricky, but I am definitely up for the challenge! One thing that really inspires me as I meet the students we're going to work with for our practicum, is the dedication they have to better their lives. They had the courage to ask for help which is always the first step, and I am proud to be able to help them attain that goal.

We look forward to future reflections as we delve more deeply into our lessons and discover more of the intricacies of working with adults with learning disabilities. Stay tuned!





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### 2017 New Year's Resolutions

**Karen:** I have a bad habit of racing through my day because there is so much to be done. Consequently, people can get anxious around me including my 4-year old daughter, Haley. My goal for 2017 is to slow down.

**Renaë:** My family and I are planning to form more healthy habits: to exercise, eat healthier and take vitamins.

**Kim:** I am planning for an organized 2017. Clutter affects the mind, body and emotions, and by decluttering and becoming more organized, I will simplify my life.

**Ocaria:** My goal for 2017 is to get back on the yoga mat and relax the mind and body!

**Umama:** This year is going to be full of exciting changes for me so my resolution is to breathe and be present.

### 2017 New Year's Resolutions

**Digna:** My goal is to leave work at work and to spend more quality time with my family.

**Cindy:** I will be working out more and eating healthier.

**Candice:** I want to stay organized and to continue to exercise and eat healthfully.

**Rebecca:** I often get caught up in the hectic schedule of daily life. In 2017, I will take a deep breath, center myself, and learn to let go of all the stress over things I cannot control.

**Sara:** I want to explore more of New York City! It's easy to take for granted what is right in front of you, and to not do the things that people come from all over the world to do. Not in 2017 - this year, my family and I will be tourists!