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# CONNECTIONS

Literacy Volunteers Association  
Cape-Atlantic, Inc.

Winter 2009

## Staff

- Sheila McLaughlin  
Executive Director
- Quenby Kotila  
Program Director
- Ann Shaw  
Student Support  
Specialist
- Patricia Epps  
Administrative  
Assistant

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Cora Perone

## From the Executive Director

No one needs to remind us that these are grim economic times. The non-profit sector, always vulnerable to the shifting winds of financial fortune, has been significantly impacted by the faltering economy. Philanthropic foundations have seen the value of their investments plummet leaving fewer dollars for distribution, while corporations struggling to survive themselves have had to drastically cut back their charitable activities. Government funding sources upon which LVA is dependent will be required to re-evaluate the programs that have been supported in the past, and in many cases, substantially reduce funding or eliminate it altogether.

Where does that leave us? Because LVA-CA relies heavily on volunteers to deliver our programs, we are able to provide a high return on contributed funds. In other words, we are a good investment. More importantly, despite the daily dose of bad economic news, or, maybe because of it, we had the highest turnout of volunteers in our history for this winter's tutor training workshops. It was a stunning reminder of the willingness of Americans to dig in, to rally when the need is imperative and to extend a helping hand to others even as their own well-being is challenged.

Seeing the large group of volunteers assembled to offer themselves, their time and talent during this crisis when sitting morosely on the sidelines might have been the easier thing to do, was indeed an uplifting moment for everyone who observed it. And we were especially pleased that our legislators, Congressman Frank LoBiondo and Senator Jeff Van Drew were there to share it with us. It made me think of a quote from the French philosopher Albert Camus:

"In the depths of winter, I finally learned there lay within me, an invincible summer"

Welcome to our invincible summer.

Sheila McLaughlin

## Congressman and Senator Attend Tutor Graduation

Thirty-four volunteers who completed the fall tutor training workshops got a special surprise at their graduation ceremony when they received their certificates from Congressman Frank LoBiondo and Senator Jeff Van Drew. Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson also sent congratulatory certificates to each of the graduates.

"I'm always glad to attend



events like this. I know how important the work you do is," Congressman LoBiondo said. "And we thank you for doing it." Senator Van

Senator Jeff Van Drew congratulates new tutor Noel Wirth as Congressman Frank LoBiondo looks on. (Photo: Anthony Smedile, - Press of Atlantic City)

Drew echoed his appreciation for their efforts. "I recognize that the demand for your services is growing (see "Tutor Grads" pg. 5)

## LVA's First Ever Harvest Cruise

A perfect autumn day provided calm waters for LVA's Harvest Cruise. Passengers on board AC Cruises with Captain Jeff George out of Gardiner's Basin were treated to a stunning sunset and a sparkling view of the inlet bay area during the hour-long cruise.

"We were treated not only to a beautiful sunset but we

also saw the moon rise," Clark Doran, LVA President commented.

More than 50 LVA supporters enjoyed a sumptuous buffet at the Flying Cloud Café following the cruise. Special thanks to sponsors A. E. Stone, Inc. and the Press of Atlantic City for making this delightful event possible.



LVA Supporters enjoy a "Harvest Cruise."

## Holiday Gala—Always a Night to Remember

Literacy Volunteers Association Cape-Atlantic celebrated 25 years of bringing unique literacy programs to the communities of Atlantic and Cape May Counties at the annual Holiday Gala held at the Ebbitt Room of The Virginia Hotel in Cape May. This elegant event brings together our friends and supporters for an evening of fine dining in the festive atmosphere of one of Cape May's most celebrated restaurants.

This year's theme was "An English Holiday Feast." Guests enjoyed a chef's selection of hors d'oeuvres, followed by a

dinner of traditional English holiday cuisine and a delicious Sticky Toffee Pudding dessert. An array of fine wines accompanied each course.

A Silent Auction featured an interesting variety of donated items that included golf and vacation packages, sports memorabilia, and artwork.

The Gala is a major annual fundraiser for LVA-CA. Sponsors included Morey's Piers, The NIA Group, South Jersey Gas and AtlantiCare. Thanks to everyone who made it a wonderful evening.



Attendees celebrate at LVA's Annual Holiday Gala at the Ebbitt Room in Cape May.

See the new video on our website featuring two tutor/student pairs!



Thank you to Josh Lucchesi for always keeping our website up-to-date. Josh donated his time and talents in creating our new online look. Please

visit us at [LVACapeAtlantic.org](http://LVACapeAtlantic.org)

## Ocean City Home Charitable Foundation Funds Literacy

Ocean City Home Charitable Foundation awarded LVA a \$2,500 grant for our Adult Literacy Program at a celebratory gathering of many of the community's most prominent non-profit organizations.

"We are thrilled to be among so many of our fellow community service organizations receiving much needed funding from Ocean Home Bank's Charitable Foundation," Executive Director, Sheila McLaughlin said. "Ocean City Home Bank has always been a great supporter of the charitable work these agencies do. They are truly a 'Home Bank' in every sense of the word."

## Tips from your Tutor Trainers - This issue - Bob Weyhmuller

Are you having difficulty finding a natural way to include writing in your lessons? All students, whether they are Basic Literacy or ESOL, need to practice writing. But sometimes it is hard to find learner-centered writing tasks for low-level students. Here's a tip that always works.

Ask your student to bring in 4 or 5 family photographs. These are great conversation starters. Everybody loves boasting about their family or describing their vacation travels or sharing memo-

ries about where they grew up. After talking about one of the pictures (think Language Experience Story here), mount it on paper or into a small album. Now, have your student label the photo with the name of the person or the place where it was taken. Another idea is to write a caption. Since captions contain just a few words, even beginning students find success with this. Middle level students can write a sentence about the picture and more advanced students can write a story about it.

Many students (and tutors) have fun with this activity and often ask to do it again and again. Over time, your learner will have a whole photo album, complete with captions and stories, to share with family and friends.

Tutor trainer Bob Weyhmuller contributed this article and is one of LVA-CA's experts on Basic Literacy and Learning Disabilities. Tutors who need help with their students in these areas should give him a call. Call the Office for contact information.

## Welcome, Quenby Kotila!

The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers welcomed Quenby Kotila as LVA's new Program Director this past fall. "I hope to use my business and personal experiences to make positive changes in the content and

the efficiency of the program," she said.

Quenby is a former LVA Board Member and tutor. She is a graduate of Rutgers University and holds an MBA from Richard Stockton College.

"We are enormously

pleased that someone of Quenby's caliber has joined us," Sheila McLaughlin, Executive Director commented. "We feel that she is the right person to move our programming forward as we face the challenges of the future."



## English for Health Literacy: Meeting the Demand

Individuals with limited English proficiency find themselves struggling when trying to navigate an English speaking health care system. LVA's "English for Health Literacy" program targets the ESOL population in the areas of Atlantic County that have the greatest need and receive the fewest services. This past fall, LVA delivered an English for Health Literacy program at two locations in Atlantic City. Denise Schiavo, an intern from Richard Stockton

College conducted programs at AtlantiCare Even Start and at the Spanish Community Center. With the support of United Way of Atlantic County over 50 participants were served at the two locations.

Health literacy is the ability to understand and act on health information. The program concentrates on the participants learning specific English terminology to express their health care needs.

The first segment focuses on speaking/

listening comprehension and the second, while reinforcing speaking and listening, concentrates on teaching the participants to read and write key words; for example, to read and understand prescription instructions and to read and fill in a basic health form at a doctor's office.

Meeting their core priorities and funded by both the United Way of Atlantic County and the United Way of Cape May County, the program has been extended for two

years in Atlantic County and will be offered for the first time this spring in Cape May County. In an effort to meet a growing demand for this service, LVA has also partnered with AtlantiCare Center for Community Health in a grant proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a Health Literacy Initiative.

## Local Students Share the Gift of Literacy

The Absecon Public Schools hosted a Celebrate Reading event at the Emma C. Attales and H. A. Marsh Schools with proceeds to benefit Literacy Volunteers Association. The celebration included several activities. Guest readers read stories to the younger children and their parents

while middle school students presented book talks on books they have read in class. The highlight of the evening was a Book Swap. The event raised \$800 for LVA from sponsors The Press of Atlantic City, Kline Construction, PNC bank and donations from the participants. Board Member

Cora Perone and Executive Director Sheila McLaughlin enjoyed their role as guest readers at the Celebration. Thanks to Rose Hagar, Media Specialist at the Absecon Public Schools for coordinating the event.

Thank you to Ms. Deborah Klipp and the Mainland High School's Computer Club. The club donated a refurbished personal computer, monitor, keyboard and mouse to Literacy Volunteers in December. We appreciate your generosity!

### Sponsor a Tutor in Training!

Materials for our volunteers who are participating in tutor training cost \$55 per individual and are provided to them at no charge. Please consider sponsoring a tutor with your gift of \$55.

## Working Together Works!

An adult basic education study group has been meeting each week at the Literacy Volunteers Association Learning Center. Members of the group are helping each other to achieve their literacy

goals. Ann Shaw, LVA Student Support Specialist has been facilitating the group.

Participants are learning that there are many ways to develop and improve their literacy skills. "This

collaborative study experience can be very successful," Ann said. "The participants teach and learn at the same time. And there's a lot of enthusiasm and camaraderie in the group as well."

## Thank you, MLK Day Volunteers

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, two volunteers from Jewish Family Service, Susann and Chris Roedell, put in shelves and reorganized the supply closet at the LVA office. This is the second year that Susann and Chris have volunteered their services to LVA. Much thanks to them and to JFS.



## Largest Ever Class of Tutors Begins Winter Workshops

On January 10, 2009, forty volunteer tutors began their training at the Shore Memorial Conference Center in Somers Point. It was the largest group ever to enter the program.

The large number of volunteers demonstrates the willingness of people to give back to their communities during difficult times. LVA welcomes all of them and thanks them for their commitment.



## A Success Story

Tutor Stephanie Preston reports that her student, Ailing, an engineer from China, found her arrival in America a scary experience because she did not know the language and customs. Being good with numbers, however, helped her to succeed in Dealers School. She got a job in a casino, but because of her insecurity with English, she found it difficult to relate to her customers and co-workers. If she was waiting at an ele-

vator, for instance, and someone else came to wait with her, she would leave and take the stairs because she feared that she couldn't answer in English if the person spoke to her.

She saw the LVA ad at the library and decided to call. She was matched with Stephanie in February, 2007. During the year, they met weekly and Ailing set her goal to become a U. S. citizen. Working together, she and her tutor prepared

her for the citizenship test. She passed both the written and interview portions in October 2007, and achieved her goal of becoming a citizen.

Stephanie reports that Ailing's confidence has increased, and she is more comfortable with speaking English. Today, she waits for the elevator and speaks to those who wait with her. Thanks, Stephanie. Nice going, Ailing.

Literacy Volunteers of NJ is presenting its annual Literacy for Life Conference on April 25, 2009 at the Burlington County College in Mt Laurel, NJ. The conference includes 19 workshops. Interested tutors should call the office for details - 609-383-3377.

## LUCKY WINNER IN PRESS CONTEST WINS TICKETS TO MADONNA CONCERT

Harriet Riehl of Cape May County was the winner of two tickets to a Madonna Concert in a drawing sponsored by The Press of Atlantic City. Proceeds from the contest benefited the Newspapers in Education Program of The Press and Literacy Volunteers Association Cape-Atlantic.

## New Citizens

We are proud to announce that tutor Dot Saatkamp's students, Ying Li Liu and Feng Zhen Zheng both became citizens last year. Congratulations to all.

## Dollar General Supports LVA

We gratefully acknowledge the \$2,000 grant we received this past fall from Dollar General. Dollar General has been a long-time supporter of literacy programs across the country and has provided funding for LVA in the past. Thank you again, Dollar General for your outstanding corporate support of our efforts.

## Tutor Grads (cont'd from pg 1)

ing. We are fortunate that we have citizens like you who are willing to volunteer your time to help others in the community." The New Jersey legislators have long demonstrated their commitment and strong support for the work of Literacy Volunteers Association. They regularly attend LVA fundraising events and advocate for our mission. Thanks, Senator Van Drew and Congressman LoBiondo. You made the day even more special for our special tutors.

Online Trainer Certification Class:  
Visit the website:  
<http://207.10.202.150>  
and sign up to take a free, self-paced course given by ProLiteracy on the Performance Accountability Initiative.

Literacy Volunteers Cape-Atlantic is in need of donated bulk shredding services to clear out the paper files which we no longer need due to students achieving their goals and moving on. If you can help, please give us a call. Thank you for your support.

Become a Literacy Volunteers Advocate. If you belong to a local social group and would like to speak about what we do, please contact Pat Epps at the office for speaking points and to let us know what group you are talking to. Or - give us a call and we will be happy to speak to your group.

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering with LVA or participating in the student program, please complete and return this form:

**I am interested in:**

- Becoming a tutor
- Becoming a student
- Helping with projects
- Making a donation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Literacy Volunteers Assn  
Cape-Atlantic, Inc.

743 N. Main St.,  
Pleasantville, NJ 08232

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

2ND ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST SET FOR APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>  
Attention Poets! The Ventnor Branch of the Atlantic County Library System will again be the setting for our Annual Poetry Contest. This year, poets of all ages will be invited to participate. Watch for further details.

**Our Next Tutor Training**

**Where:** ACUA Recycling Building  
Delilah Road, Egg Harbor Township, NJ  
**When:** 5 consecutive Thursday mornings

**Time:** 10 AM -1 PM

**Dates:** February 26, March 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2009



**Literacy Volunteers Association**  
Cape-Atlantic, Inc.

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**Mission Statement:**

Helping individuals in Atlantic and Cape May Counties improve their English language skills so they can participate more fully in family, workplace and community life.