

## Literacy of Northern New York May 2020 Newsletter

Our theme for this newsletter is how life goes on, particularly tutoring, and how proud we are of our tutors who faced the challenges head on and have been able to continue tutoring. We realize that some matches are not suitable for online tutoring because of lack of internet service or a student who has limited finances and can't afford to use up many cell phone minutes for tutoring. Those tutors will resume their lessons after the Pause is lifted in New York State. LNNY is still going strong!

### A Note to All Tutors

First, when you submit tutoring hours until the office reopens, on the Google form, put the total number of hours just as you have done in the past. In the Notes section, I need you to specify the date and number of hours for each date. **For example, put 4.25.20, 1 hour, 4.30, 2 hours.** I have to record the daily instructional hours on a special form for the time being.

Second, even if you have not been tutoring during the shutdown, most of us have had some communication with our students about, for example, surviving during the Covid-19 situation. Perhaps you talked about community resources such as food banks, how to apply for unemployment insurance, where to get tested, etc. Please include a brief message in your notes, but be specific about dates and the nature of your discussions. As Case Manager, I have another form to track this information.

I appreciate your cooperation. We are trying to extend our services and provide assistance to our students, who may be suffering financially or otherwise during the pandemic.

**Please fill out the form for hours with any notes even if you did not tutor during April. Thank you!**

### A Letter of Encouragement from Ruth Colvin During this Difficult Time

*Ruth Colvin is the founder of the non-profit organization Literacy Volunteers of America, which merged with Laubach Literacy International in 2002 and is now called ProLiteracy. The headquarters for ProLiteracy is in Syracuse. Ruth was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush in December 2006. She is 103 and is still active in literacy endeavors. She's an amazing woman and an inspiration to all of us who work in the adult literacy field. Here's her letter:*



Ruth Colvin

To all Literacy Volunteers,

As you look back when I started LVA in 1962, we ALL were volunteers. You and I have continued to be volunteers, but we're fortunate to have dedicated staff and board supporting us.

Our main goal is to change our students' lives by teaching them to read and speak English. But a big surprise - YOUR and MY lives have been and continue to be changed by our

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contacts with our students.

As volunteers you and I have met people of other languages, other religions, races, ages, genders, some well-educated, some with no education - for it's lifelong learning. I understand some of you have quickly adapted and are continuing teaching by phone, by Skype or Zoom.

May I suggest all of you do keep in contact with your students - perhaps only a phone call every week. You might suggest your student write one or several sentences a day telling what he or she did that day - start of a journal which she/he'll enjoy reading years from now. Or practice English together over the phone or iPhone. Or you may have other ideas to share with the other volunteers.

You might enjoy my book, coming out at ProLiteracy in a few weeks - "My Travels Through Life, Love and Literacy - Over 100 Years in the Making." Yes, I'm 103, and looking back I found that seeds were planted in my early life to make me the person I am. A chapter on how I started LVA, the secrets to my longevity, 40 international stories that impacted my life, and more. I hope you'll look back to your own early life, seeing why YOU are the person you are and why you continue to teach and keep an open mind.

Thank you for continuing to support and to teach for your program. We need you and your students need you.

My best to each of you.

Sincerely, Ruth Colvin

### Tutors Share Their Experiences with Distance Learning

#### **Marilyn Wekar, LNNY Treasurer**

Two months ago, I took my student Elizabeth (pictured at right) to the Flower Memorial Library to get a library card. After touring the library, Elizabeth checked two books out. She has been reading ever since. She emails summaries to me about the books as well as new vocabulary words. This process has been very successful in helping Elizabeth improve her reading comprehension and learning new vocabulary.



#### **Marie Steinbeck**

The thought of not seeing my lovely student Maricela for months was unthinkable. We have been working together via FaceTime. Deborah delivered to me the textbooks I needed.

Maricela has made great progress in math and reading comprehension during the month of April.

We meet once a week for two hours. During that time, we review homework, which is generally a review of math skills and reading workbook pages. We then tackle new math skills and work on review of vocabulary. Math word problems are also a reading challenge as many times wording is unusual compared to general conversation.

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I am able to see her work through FaceTime. I can also show her correct computation.

I have also been able to show her the ducks and geese along the area of the Black River on which I live. I was able to chat with her children. They are having a lovely time studying at home.

It is kind of fun to sit at home in my PJs and communicate with Maricela.

### **Annie Siamwala, Program Assistant, Fort Drum**

Our Distance English as a Second Language classes with the spouses of Fort Drum soldiers has been a big transition during these uncertain times, but a successful one. Students are attending classes with our teachers through the Zoom platform twice a week. Through PowerPoint presentations, reading exercises, videos, comprehension questions, conversation, and grammar skills, we are continuing our mission of providing effective, fun, and dynamic ESL classes to our students. We are always supporting our learners and are in constant communication with them through social media platforms, willing to provide help and assist them in any way we can in order for them to successfully carry on their journey of ESL learning.



### **Deborah**



This has been so much fun. At first, it was a challenge to learn how to use Zoom, the online platform for presenting a class. The next obstacle was trying out different content and finding out what worked best to deliver instruction. I use PowerPoint and list my lesson content along with links to documents and web links. It has been a learning experience. I have Beginner and Intermediate English classes.

I leave the faces of the students showing during the sessions, which gives it a semblance of being in the classroom together. The social component of the lessons is extremely important. I revised my class schedules to offer different times for the students to attend. I now have six lessons, including one on Monday evenings. Some students are even attending every class.

I include similar content to the in-person classes, have handouts that I email or send a link to Google drive, and show the actual material in the lessons. For the first few minutes of each class, I allow chit-chat time. I am pleased with the involvement of the students and I have a wonderful group. They told me that they hope the online format can continue for the times that they cannot attend in-person classes.