



The LVSA Landscape

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2010

DID YOU KNOW:

- Nationally, 7 million American adults are illiterate?
- Nationally, the unemployment rate for individuals with less than a high school diploma is 9%?
- One in 7 Delawareans is illiterate?
- 68,000 Delawareans, out of a total population of 873,092, have only the literacy skills to be able to read a simple children's picture book?
- 13% of New Castle County residents speak a language other than English at home?

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LVSA Recognizes Learner Achievement

On September 16th, Executive Director Cindy Shermeyer addressed a group of thirty three learners from LVSA's ESL classes at Bear Library. "Your determination and commitment inspire me to come to work every day," she told the group.

It was this commitment and determination to learn English that LVSA sought to honor and commend at its first annual Learner Recognition Ceremony at Bear Library. Set during national Adult Education and Family Literacy week, the ceremony awarded learners with certificates of participation and included special awards for remarkably high attendance and achievement.



As ESL teacher Karen Kinsella handed out certificates, adding personal messages for each learner, she beamed about upcoming citizenship exams and highlighted with a smile those learners who couldn't attend—due to new-

found employment!

The event also featured short speeches from exemplary learners, like Doris from Ghana, and Helen and Lilian from Tawain.

Behind September's AEFL Week

LVSA's Learner recognition reception came during "AEFL week" in mid-September. But what is AEFL week, and what are its origins?

In July, **Congress approved a resolution** to designate the week of September 13, 2010 as *Adult Education and Family Literacy Week*. It was conceived, as the resolution states, to raise "public awareness about the importance of adult education and family

literacy" and "encourage people across the United States to support programs to assist those in need of adult education and family literacy programs."

During the week, the online social media community buzzed with literacy facts and challenges, and local pro-literacy organizations across the country held events to both raise awareness and recognize existing achievements.

Meanwhile, President Obama issued a proclamation recognizing "the importance of adult education and family literacy programs, calling upon the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, libraries, nonprofit organizations ... and businesses to support increased access to adult education and family literacy programs to ensure a literate society."

Last Month at a Glance

Events

- Sept 8: Tutor training at Woodlawn library begins
- Sept. 13-17: National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week
- Sept 15: LVSA Picnic
- Sept 16: Bear Recognition Reception
- Oct 12: New Learner Orientation

Staff News

- Cathy Opdenaker hired as Administrative Assistant
- Executive Director Cynthia Shermeyer a panelist at a workshop for the Association of Fundraising Professionals

Supporters & Friends

- We received an **\$8,000 grant** from the Governor's Hispanic Consortium for a class at the Bear Library



Above: Classes underway at Bear Library



Doris of Ghana poses with certificate for outstanding attendance

LVSA Recognizes Learner Achievement

The event concluded with light refreshments and time for learners, teachers, and other attendees to share their experiences.

Others on hand included Diana Brown, Community Services Administrator for New Castle County Libraries, Marlene Esposito, Administrative Librarian for New Castle County Libraries, and Bear Library Manager Eric Kuhn, who introduced LVSA as “one of

our favorite programs.”

Though not in attendance, Congressman Mike Castle sent a letter expressing his “best wishes and congratulations.”

The LVSA program will continue at Bear under a Self Sufficiency Community Services Block Grant through First State Community Action Agency.

—Adam Koppeser



Karen Kinsella awards Lisa (Shuhua) from China with a certificate of participation

Literacy in the News

National

- ProLiteracy applauds President Obama's *Skills for America's Future* initiative; but qualifies that “college degree goal can't be met without including adult literacy and basic education.”
- Congressman Dan Maffei (D-NY) sponsors an Adult Literacy Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- ProLiteracy and Literacy Powerline present the *Declaration for the Right to Literacy* scroll to Maffei, displaying over 30,000 signatories from political leaders and community members from across the country.

International

- Adult Literacy Information Exchange, first-ever symposium of eight African nations on illiteracy challenges, held September 8–10 in Scottburgh, South Africa.
- CN Tower in Toronto, Canada lights orange in honor of local literacy organization's efforts

For more, visit www.proliteracy.org



LVSA Profile: Cathy Opdenaker



When you call LVSA, you'll hear the cheerful voice of our newest staff member, Cathy Opdenaker. Cathy started September 1st as our new Administrative Assistant, and we are thrilled to have her on board.

She brings to LVSA her valuable experience in website

design and database building, skills gained during twenty years of experience at DuPont, where she worked as an Executive Secretary.

Outside of work, she is a busy wife and mother of six who plays bass in her church's praise team, and attends Delaware Technical and Community College. Seeing LVSA as an organization providing

an important service for the community, Cathy joined the team and "hit the ground running."

Executive Director Cindy Shermeyer praises Cathy for taking over "so quickly and indeed, seamlessly," welcomes her to the organization, and encourages you to do the same next time you call or visit us!

Learner Focus: A Future with English

The following are selected student writings from the English 200 Class, a small upper multi-level ESL group that meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Recently, learners were asked to write a paragraph about what they hope will change when they can speak proficient English.

Learner 1: M.M. from Mexico

"For me, speaking English is the most important part, because if you can speak English you can communicate with all kinds of people. Also, I can help my children with their homework. Then, I can improve my skills in my job, because it is a big responsibility to carry children on the bus, and for me, it is important to understand them and for them to understand me."

M.M.

M.M. is a mother and doubles as a school bus driver in the afternoons. She came here from Mexico 22 years ago and is a U.S. citizen. She is a very engaged parent, and asks many questions about education and the schools, because she wants her children to get the best possible education. She loves driving schoolchildren on her bus, but is sometimes frustrated that she can't understand everything they say. Also, they occasionally don't understand her, and she doesn't like that. She hopes to achieve "perfect" English someday.

Learner 2: J.L. from Mexico

"My life is changing for good because I speak better English. I hope to find a better job in the future, help my children with their homework, communicate with my children's teacher about them and their education, attend school conferences, and discuss their progress. Another goal I hope for is to get my U.S. citizenship in a few years and vote in the elections. Thanks to my teacher." J.L.

J.L. is a young husband and father, originally from Mexico, who has lived in the U.S. for 17 years. He is a construction worker, currently on disability for a work-related injury to his back. He's an interested and attentive father, and takes care of his two young children while his wife works. Jose hopes to get a good job as soon as he can return to work. His English is pretty good already, but he knows he makes a lot of grammar mistakes and has trouble with verb tenses. He realizes that the better his English, the better chance he has of getting a really good job.

Learner 3: M.G. from Mexico

"I hope I can talk better with my grandson's teacher and can help him better with his homework. I hope, too, that I can understand all conversations and tell my opinion about them. This is my dream." M.G.

M.G. is a grandmother from Mexico who lives most of the year here in the U.S. with her son, a single parent, and her grandson, who just entered kindergarten. Mely, who retired as a dentist in Mexico, visits her home and husband in Chihuahua a couple of times a year, but is here in the U.S. because of her dedication to seeing that her grandson is well taken care of. I believe that Mely sometimes feels isolated here in the U.S., and she is anxious to learn more English for that reason, as well as so that she can help guide her grandson's education. Mely's son just accepted a job transfer to El Paso, Texas, so they will be moving soon and she will leave our program. She has been learning with us since the program began last October, and we will miss her.

—contributed by Karen Kinsella, ESL

"I hope to...help my children with their homework, communicate with my children's teacher about them and their education, attend school conferences, and discuss their progress."



Literacy Volunteers Serving Adults

Opening Minds ... Changing Lives

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The purpose of Literacy Volunteers Serving Adults is to help adults improve literacy skills and thereby realize their potential to be confident, self sufficient, and productive employees and community members. We deliver services and programs in reading, writing, English language, math, workplace, and computer skills. LVSA works to create public understanding of the impact of illiteracy and advocates for literacy solutions.

LVSA Horizon: Upcoming Events and Info

LVSA Scrabble Spellebration!

Join us for an afternoon team battle of wits and words in our Spellebration Scrabble tournament, where teams of up to five may compete to win a trophy, and support literacy in Delaware!

Where: Widener University Law School's Barrister's Club
4601 Concord Pike
Wilmington, DE 19803

When: Saturday, October 23rd
Registration begins at 12 PM
1-4:00 p.m. Rounds, Scoring and Breaks
4:00-5 p.m. Awards,
Announcement of Raffle Winners
\$150 for a team of 5, Earlybird
\$125 on or before 9/20



Sign up today at www.litvolunteers.org or call LVSA at (302) 658-5624 for a registration form.

Other Upcoming Events:

Oct.20-Newark Library learner book club first meeting

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