



The Literacy Letter

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County

Winter 2011

LVSC Receives Grants to Continue Organization's Growth; Miss New Jersey joins Uncle Floyd to Laugh for Literacy

Grants...

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County recently received grants from Dollar General Literacy Foundation, the Billian Family Charitable Foundation, the Lowell F. Johnson Foundation and the Gibson Family Foundation.

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation provided a gift of \$8,000 to help reduce the waiting time that people experience when coming to LVSC for services.

"We have already put things in motion to work on the reduction in time," said Executive Director Alan Karmin. "We always have long waiting lists...that is just the nature of how it works. But we have worked to implement some new techniques that will hopefully greatly reduce the lag time for people who need our services."

The average wait time has been 3-9 months. Karmin said that a new program should cut that time in at least half.

The Billian Family Charitable Foundation (\$5,000), the Lowell F. Johnson Foundation (\$2,500), and the Gibson Family Foundation (\$2,500) gave their gifts to ensure that LVSC continues to provide services throughout Somerset County and the surrounding communities.

"Our growth as an organization and, more importantly, the continuous growth in the number of people who come to us desperate for services has dictated that we continue to look for people and organizations who are willing to partner with us to fight illiteracy in the community," said Karmin. "These gifts show that there is a commitment out there within the community to do just that. We appreciate the show of confidence in our organization during this unprecedented period."

Laugh for Literacy...

Floyd Vivino, more commonly known as New Jersey's comic icon Uncle Floyd, made a return engagement in Laugh for Literacy 2 on October 29 at the Somerville Elks Lodge in Bridgewater. Joining Uncle Floyd was Ashleigh Udalovas, better known as Miss New Jersey.

Uncle Floyd provided the laughs and Miss New Jersey talked about her commitment to fighting illiteracy for the nearly 100 people who packed the hall to enjoy the show and provide support for LVSC.



From left to right: Miss New Jersey, Ashleigh Udalovas, and Uncle Floyd are flanked by (l-r) board members Laura Belanger, Martha Davis, Stephen Koehler, Morris Balacco, Michelle Bobev and Michelle Molinaro-Burke and Executive Director Alan Karmin.

Upcoming LVSC Events

Scrabble Night and Tricky Tray
Saturday, January 22, 2011

30th Anniversary Celebration!
Saturday, April 30, 2011

A View From The Top...

Thoughts from LVSC's Board President

Yes, it is that time of the year again when Mother Nature has traded her colorful garment for a mantle of white, and we are reminded that yet another year is rapidly coming to an end. It is at this time of change that I usually give myself a mental account of goals achieved in my personal life as well as my volunteer life and, well, even failures that I quickly choose to dismiss.

I am satisfied in knowing that LVSC enjoyed a good 2010. The Mimi Ruch bequest, coupled with the various income streams implemented by the executive director and the wise guidance of the Board of Trustees, aided LVSC to fare the stormy economy unscathed. This does not, however, mean that we can rest on our laurels. In fact, we need to collectively do a better job in fundraising, and bring about more community awareness to ensure the future health of the organization.

In the thirty-year existence of LVSC, Sunday, June 13, 2010, marked a special day, as Room 250A of the PeopleCare Center was named posthumously the "Mimi Ruch Memorial Literacy Office." Mimi's generous bequest, a first-time gift of its kind to LVSC, allows us to grow the organization into the best of its kind, while continuing to stay true to our mission to improve lives through literacy in Somerset County and the surrounding communities.

Our debut at the Quik Check Balloon Festival in July turned out short of being a winner. In a small way it did bring awareness of the organization, but only to those tempted to give the wheel a spin for a prize. Nevertheless, it was agreed not to participate at the 2011 festival, as the rewards did not merit the time and effort spent.

Our other first-time event, however, did merit our time and effort. The Appreciation Picnic held in August on the grounds of the PeopleCare Center, was well attended by tutors, students, and their families. It was an opportunity to mingle, share stories and enjoy the various delicious

six-foot hoagies to the tunes of Neil Diamond. Thank you notes from those who attended were very much appreciated, and we are planning on making the picnic an annual event.

The picnic also gave our two new board members, David Jefferson Harris, Jr., and Stephen Koehler an opportunity to get to know some of the attendees including other trustees. It is with much pleasure that I welcome them to the Board of Trustees of LVSC.

Summer became autumn, and once again Uncle Floyd made his October appearance at the Somerville Elks Lodge in Bridgewater. While the evening was fun, it lacked in attendance despite Miss New Jersey's appearance and everyone's untiring efforts. The event proved less profitable than we had hoped, which is a major consideration for next year.

The holiday season reminds me to thank everyone for their time and gift-wrapping skills at Borders. This is an important task for us done this time of year and for Mother's Day and Father's Day. If you are available to help with this important fundraiser, please alert our chairpersons Michelle Burke, Michelle Bobev or Lisa Leifer.

As we near the end of 2010 and enjoy the festivities of the season and its deeper meaning, I am grateful for the love of family and friends, and I am most indebted to our brave men and women who serve on distant shores to secure the safety of the Homeland.

In closing, I should like to say that it has been a privilege to work with my Board of Trustees and the Executive Director this past year. Thank you for your support.

I wish you the simple joys of the season...love and laughter, quiet joy and good friends, the silent miracles of the heart.



Martha Davis
Board President

Our Mission

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County is committed to promoting literacy throughout the community by providing student-centered tutoring for adults so that they may function more effectively in their daily lives. Our mission is founded on the belief that the ability to read and communicate is imperative to leading a productive and functional life, and is essential for the protection of individual freedom and equality of all people.

We are committed to accomplishing this mission by:

- Training volunteer tutors in the fundamentals of Basic Literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction that include reading, writing, listening and speaking skills
- Providing tutors with ongoing support and in-service skills development programs
- Locating and recruiting functionally illiterate learners
- Creating and maintaining collaborative tutor-learner matches
- Helping learners establish and reach realistic personal goals
- Promoting learner self-sufficiency



LVSC...

A Message from the Executive Director

As I recently completed my third year at the helm of Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County, I took some time to look back at all that has happened during that time and how far the organization has come.

LVSC has made such great strides that it has earned the depiction as a "leader in our network" by the national organization. More people are being served in a larger geographical region than ever before. And our annual budget has grown exponentially.

As reported previously, LVSC went through a grueling re-accreditation process, and we were lauded for a number of things including our publications, website, fundraising plan and financial procedures.

A lot has changed in three years, especially in the way we conduct business. While there was a lot of discomfort when initially implemented, we moved forward with technology and the age of paper submissions gave way to the electronic age. All applications of volunteers and students, as well as submissions of tutor hours, are taken strictly electronically.

The matching process has now gone electronic as we are implementing a system that is similar to computer dating. Information for each side—tutors and students—are input into the system and we are able to come up with the top five matches for both. This will streamline the process, cutting out the exhausting time it takes to go through everyone's information to find the right (hopefully) match. It should also work to shorten the lag time for the many students on the waiting list.

LVSC has always had a long waiting list. The number was always approximately the same because as quickly as we

would train new volunteers, many more would sign up looking for services. And now that our service area has reached beyond the borders of Somerset County, there is even higher demand for what we do.

LVSC has made its mark as a provider of one-to-one and small group tutoring. Providing that individualized service has now become a luxury and, perhaps, not a reality for everyone who reaches out to us. We need to be able to answer the call for a larger number of people in a shorter period of time.

How do we accomplish this?

We conducted a pilot program where we partnered with an organization that recruited the volunteers and LVSC conducted the training. The organization already had a list of students that LVSC assessed and then those people who were certified by LVSC began tutoring the students. The matches were completed and administrated by that organization and LVSC provided ongoing training and technical assistance to the tutors. The partner organization was able to serve 75 new students.

This model is something that LVSC will continue to emulate. We have reached out to other entities in the community—churches, civic organizations, etc.— that would like to provide assistance for those facing problems with all forms of literacy. And we welcome the opportunity to forge partnerships with any entity that would like to join us in our mission to fight illiteracy.

I urge everyone to be more active with LVSC and be a part of the growth. Come to our events—our Scrabble Night and Tricky Tray is just around the corner. Hope to see everyone there!

Alan Karmin

Alan Karmin
Executive Director

LVSC receives re-accreditation from Pro-Literacy America

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County got official word from Pro-Literacy America that it has received re-accreditation from the national organization. ProLiteracy's accreditation provides literacy programs with a comprehensive process for: 1) conducting an organizational self-assessment; 2) developing program improvement plans; and 3) demonstrating that their organization meets the highest standards for governance, program management, program operations, and volunteer development.

"The members were impressed with the work of your organization," said Pro-Literacy America spokesperson David Whitaker. "We are proud to have your affiliate as a leader in our network. Please pass along my congratulations to all of the people in your organization who have contributed to this accomplishment."



A Holiday Message *Seasons Greetings from LVSC*

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County 2009-10

- LVSC went through ProLiteracy America's re-accreditation process
- ProLiteracy America commended LVSC for a number of things including our financial reporting and record-keeping processes; annual fundraising plan, quarterly newsletter and annual report; and our website
- Trained and certified 78 new volunteer tutors
- Matched 114 new adult students with a tutor
- Expanded our sources for income to include clothing donation bins, auto donations and Cash for Gold
- Held Laugh for Literacy featuring New Jersey comedy legend Uncle Floyd and comic hypnotist Marshall Manlove
- Received bequest from former tutor Mimi Ruch and dedicated Room 250A of the PeopleCare Center the Mimi Ruch Memorial Literacy Office

*May your holidays be filled with happiness and good health,
good cheer and the precious warmth of family together.*

May you also be blessed with...

Special memories...of all the yesterdays.

Bright tomorrows...with much to be thankful for.

A path...that leads to beautiful tomorrows...all through the coming year.

Hopes and dreams...that do their best to come through.

Your friends at

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County

A Night of Family Fun!

Join Us for a Game of Scrabble and Tricky Tray



and Tricky Tray

Saturday, January 22, 2011

Somerville Elks Lodge, Bridgewater, NJ

Team tournament with two players per team

Three games guaranteed with dinner, dessert, t-shirt &
5 tickets for the Tricky Tray

1st, 2nd, 3rd Place Prizes Awarded!

Only \$100 per team!

(\$125 per team after December 15, 2010)

\$25 for non-participants (includes dinner and tricky tray)

Singles may register for \$50 and be matched with a teammate

(\$65 per single after December 15, 2010)

Let the games begin! Register at:

www.literacysomerset.org

Or call 908-725-5430

Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m. First game begins at 7:00 p.m. sharp!

Sponsored by



Donate Today and Become a Friend of Literacy!

The vitality of any institution is often defined and measured by the strength of its annual giving program, both in terms of financial commitments and the rate of participation. An annual gift is truly a vote of confidence in Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County and its mission.

LVSC's annual fund provides support for every area of activity undertaken by the organization including tutor training and supplies, student assessments, tutoring services and administration, ongoing programs and promising new initiatives that make LVSC's programs not only exceptional...but FREE.

It is imperative that LVSC continually strives to increase annual contributions, establishing a reliable source of unrestricted support to fulfill its ongoing operating needs.

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We rely strictly on private contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations and other organizations.

Donating to LVSC is a easy. You can make an online donation and know that your information is totally secure and will not be shared with any other entity. In fact, if you are one of the first 100 people to make an online donation of \$30 or more, you will receive a special 30th Anniversary t-shirt as our way of saying "thanks" for your support.

Donate online by simply visiting us at www.LiteracySomerset.org. All donations made via credit card will appear as "Netcharge (877) 625-0290" on your billing statement.

All transactions are fully secured for your protection.

If you prefer to send a check, mail your gift to:

LVSC
120 Finderne Avenue, Box 7
Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807

Deposit your unwanted, good, used clothing in our donation bins throughout the area. Visit us at www.literacysomerset.org for a location near you. You can also help us to acquire more locations. Email us at info@literacysomerset.org for more information.



Payroll Deduction

Ask your employer about having your gift to LVSC come directly from your paycheck. And, in a lot of cases, your employer will match your gift by 100%. So that is a way to have your gift make even more of an impact.

Corporate Sponsorship

Corporate sponsorships are available throughout the year for the LVSC website and special events. Check with us to discuss the sponsorship giving levels available.

Legacies and Bequests

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County deeply appreciates those that have remembered us in their estates. If you would like to consider us when you do your estate planning, please contact us to provide the necessary assistance and appropriate paperwork.

Thank you for your continued support!

The Success Circle...group for students of LVSC

For years the students of LVSC had only the tutoring they were getting. But now, thanks to student Raneen Elbakry and her tutor, Donna Sturm, current and former students of LVSC tutors have a group available to them to: 1) continue their learning; 2) engage with a group of people experience the same difficulties; 3) socialize with others who have similar experiences; and 4) be a part of the organization other than just being a student.

"This is a group run by students, for students, for the betterment of their literacy skills," said Raneen Elbakry, "and to provide for social interaction and networking."

"For too long the students the students received tutoring services and that was it," said Executive Director Alan Karmin. "In the same way we want to see the tutors more committed to being a complete part of the organization, we want to see the students feel like they are a part of the organization."

Karmin added that he would like to see The Success Circle become to LVSC what an alumni association is to any college or university.

"We would like to see that students appreciate what we do, enough so that they want to remain a part of the organization," he said. "Thousands of people have received our services over the years, it would be nice to have them remain with us and help us to help others that come along for the same help that they themselves received."

For more information about The Success Circle and upcoming events, please email info@literacysomerset.org or visit www.literacysomerset.org.



Above: Board Member Morris Balacco tends to visitors at the Somerville Street Fair.

Below: Miss New Jersey, Ashleigh Udalovas, speaks to the audience about her commitment to fighting illiteracy.



Below: Uncle Floyd entertains the crowd music and laughs.





*Scrabble Night and Tricky Tray
Saturday, January 22, 2011
Register now at www.literacysomerset.org.
Space is limited!*

Executive Committee
Martha Davis, President
Michelle Molinaro-Burke, VP, Sec.
Stephen Klopfer, Treasurer

Trustees
Morris Balacco
Michelle Bobev
Patricia Flannery
David Harris
Bob Kane
Stephen Koehler

Staff
Alan Karmim, Executive Director
Angela Horan, Office Manager
Yolanda Rodriguez, Admin. Asst.
Missy Klingenburg, Office Volunteer

120 Finderne Ave, Box 7
Mimi Ruch Memorial Literacy Office
Bridgewater, NJ 08807



Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County
Serving Somerset County and Surrounding Communities
An Affiliate of ProLiteracy America



Get a free t-shirt!

Make an "online" gift of \$30 or more and you can get an LVSC t-shirt.
Just go to www.literacysomerset.org and make your gift today!

Donate your used auto!

Get a tax-deduction of full blue book value! Call the LVSC office
at 908-725-5430 for details.



Donate your unwanted, used, good clothing!

LVSC is collecting clothes to raise money for our ever-growing organization.
Visit www.literacysomerset.org or call 908-725-5430 for drop-off locations.

We are also searching for more locations for our clothing donation bins. Email us at
www.literacysomerset.org to find out how you can help with our clothing drive.