



# The Literacy Letter

Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County

Issue No. 2 2008

## LVSC Applauds Its Volunteers

Awards were presented at the annual meeting on June 9 to recognize volunteers for their many hours, days and years of service to help LVSC fulfill its mission of promoting literacy.

### Twenty Years

Jackie Flamm  
Vivian Okrepky

### Fifteen Years

Dan Colodner

### Ten Years

Nancy Roberts  
Sheryl Rosenberg

### Five Years

Virginia Egan  
Lynnette Klar  
Susan Smith

### Outstanding Service Awards

Kathy Coulahan  
Alice "Lorie" Glass

### Alma Liotta Award

Sharon Caldwell

### Community Service Awards

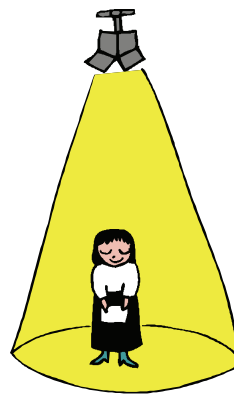
Borders Books, Bridgewater  
The Courier News



Recognized at the annual meeting and recognition night were, left to right, Denise Ruiz-Cabrera, Shirley Marlatt, tutors; Sharon Wang, Rosa Rios, student speakers; William "Skip" Hidlay, Courier News president and publisher; Sharon Caldwell, Kathy Coulahan, volunteers.

## Spotlight on a Special Volunteer

The Alma Liotta Award is given to volunteers who have given extraordinary service to LVSC, and this year's recipient is no exception.



Alma Liotta was the founder of Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County in 1981 under the sponsorship of the Central New Jersey Reading Council.

Making the presentation at the annual meeting and recognition night in June, outgoing LVSC president Allison Kalban-Gernett said, "Sharon Caldwell has made a significant difference, always willing to step into any void to help the organization."

And a run-down of the many roles she has played shows Sharon has stepped in a lot since she joined LVSC in 2001. She has tutored six different students since then. In 2003 she became a student assessor and continues this valuable role currently. "I enjoy the energy of working with the students and knowing I'm helping them to be matched with tutors," she explained.

Bridgewater is home to Sharon and her husband of 40 years, Peter. Her appreciation of language extends to theater, and she's a regular subscriber to local and New York City productions. You might also find her at the Somerville YMCA during aquatic exercise class or keeping her math skills honed as an avid bridge player.

Sharon retired from a career with the state as director of vocational rehabilitation. Years before her retirement she remembers hearing a speaker at a community service council lunch meeting. A new organization was being formed in Somerset County to promote and assist with adult literacy. Sharon was inspired enough to know that 'when she had time' that would be something to explore. She doesn't recall the speaker's name but it might have been Alma Liotta, who would be glad to know volunteers like Sharon are still serving the people of Somerset County promoting literacy!

## Meet Martha Davis

### A Conversation with LVSC's New Board President

As I begin my term as president of the board of trustees of LVSC, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the past presidents who have given their service to the board. I would like to give a special thank you to the most recent president, Allison Kalban-Gernett, for her valuable contributions to LVSC over the years, and for her dedication as president of the board for the past year.

Allison, your friends at LVSC wish you and your family the best of luck as you settle into another part of New Jersey.

I am aware that many of you do not know me, but I have actually been an enthusiastic participant in our organization for over six years.

In the spring of 2002, I graduated from the tutor training program and was immediately matched with a single mom from Syria who spoke no English. My student was a dedicated and eager learner, whose goal was to become a nurse's aid. Nahad and I were together for a year and a half, during which time our tutor/student relationship turned into what I am sure many of you who have tutored have also experienced – a friendship.

Nahad was a student speaker at our first dinner/silent auction in 2004, and although she has left the area, I am told that she is attending school to realize her dream.

When LVSC decided to have conversation groups, I jumped right in. My conversation group of five Asian women and I met at the Hillsborough Library once a week, where they learned about America from its earliest history and I, in turn, was educated about their culture. It was a truly rewarding experience.

My career, so to speak, at Literacy Volunteers of

Somerset County has also included committee involvement, co-chairing and chairing our dinner/silent auction fundraiser, chairing our annual meeting and tutor/student recognition night, and being an active board member.

This brag sheet is not my forte, but because of my new roll in the organization, I wanted you to know where I come from. Painful to read? It was more painful to write!

I am very excited at the opportunity to work closely with our executive director, Alan Karmin, and the board to propel the organization forward, while keeping in mind our mission to promote literacy in Somerset County.

I invite each and every one to join in the organization's dinners and fundraisers, because you are an integral part of what we do. For volunteer opportunities go to our new web site, [www.literacysomerset.org](http://www.literacysomerset.org), and get involved with LVSC, where we strive to improve lives – one person at a time.

Let's make this an incredible year!

*Martha*

#### Board of Directors 2008-09

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### 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*



## Tutor Brag Book

These are just some of the many student accomplishments that tutors have shared in their reporting logs.

Paula from Portugal made an American friend in her neighborhood!

Cecy now reads children's books in English with her daughter. They check out books every week with her new library card. They have studied the names of the 50 states and capitals for a school project.

Safaa and her tutor work with her pharmacy technical study book for career development and language advancement.

Jeongsil and her tutor Kathryn had a lesson in Stop & Shop about planning an 'American lunch' for her daughter to take on a class trip.



### Let's Keep LVSC in the News

Do you read articles in the local papers if you see LVSC or Literacy in the headlines?

My goal is to keep the community at large, as well as the 'membership' informed about events, fundraising, opportunities and achievements of LVSC. Let me know about your individual experiences with tutoring – get out some good news! You could even turn it into a writing project for your student – and send me the final edited work! Have some fun with this.

Contact me, Kathryn Weidener, at [kathryn@literacysomerset.org](mailto:kathryn@literacysomerset.org)



## New Tutors Ready to Teach

Congratulations to our new tutors: Theresa Brennan, Susan Brown, Susan Caden, Zakia Elsammani, Jennifer Furey, Jeanne Heller, Jonathan Katz, Kathryn Lee, Marissa Panton, Emily Piotrowski, Sebastian Piotrowski, Loraine Soltis, Betty Sullivan.

### CALLING ALL TUTORS!

LVSC is holding a gathering of all volunteer tutors on Wednesday, September 17, at 7 p.m., at the People-Care Center, 120 Findeme Avenue, Bridgewater.

LVSC is requesting that ALL tutors attend. This will be your chance to get up-to-date with everything that's happening with the organization, and give us an opportunity to make sure that we are up-to-date with you.

**Pizza, soft drinks and ice cream will be served. Please RSVP to [info@literacysomerset.org](mailto:info@literacysomerset.org).**

## Celebrate International Literacy Day, September 8, 2008

International Literacy Day focuses on the need for worldwide literacy. An estimated 774 million adults lack minimum literacy skills; one in five adults are illiterate, two-thirds of them women.

This year's theme is "Literacy and Health," with a strong emphasis on Literacy and Epidemics and communicable diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria, some of the world's most important public health concerns.

The ReadWriteThink.org Web site, developed by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English with support from the Verizon Foundation, provides lesson plans and activities for reading that incorporate technology and the Internet.

Activities You Can Do With Adult Learners:

Have them match different alphabets (Chinese, Cyrillic, Arabic, Hindi, etc.) to their countries.

Read and compare folk tales from different countries: <http://folkloreandmyth.netfirms.com/>

Find an international pen pal: <http://ppi.searchy.net/>

Have ESL students write their stories, or talk about their stories at a group function.

Help adult learners understand the scope of the adult literacy issue by comparing the literacy issues internationally with those in the U.S.



**Dear Miss Reed,**

***I am leaving New Jersey to live in another state on very short notice. I feel pretty bad about abandoning my student of eight months, and wonder what I should do about telling him I am moving and providing a smooth transition for him to another tutor.***

***Thanks,  
Sad Sam***

Dear Sam,

First, we are grateful you are letting us know and that you are doing what you can to make this easy for your student. Don't think of it as "abandoning" him, though. Even when we have the best of intentions, life sometimes intervenes.

Call the LVSC office to furnish information about your student and about your expected final tutoring session. You may also want to drop off your student's file and paperwork and a tally of your most recent tutoring hours at the office before your departure.

As for telling your student, you must determine the best approach. Certainly, you should tell him earlier than your last meeting that your sessions will be drawing to a close. Provide him with the date of your last meeting as early as you can as a courtesy. You may even want to make that session special in some way, such as meeting at a coffee shop to share some final thoughts, or giving him an inexpensive and appropriate goodbye gift, or a card, or letter you have written about your time together.

Unfortunately, there is not-so-good news about whether there will be a smooth transition to another tutor. LVSC will make every effort to accommodate your student's needs but the truth is, there are more than 150 people on our list still waiting to be matched for the first time.

To all you tutors out there, please think about whether you can take on another student individually, or if you are willing to tutor a small group. If you can, let us know. Also, encourage friends, relatives, co-workers, anyone you meet, to consider becoming a tutor. Now that there are four training sessions offered a year, many more people can become tutors, but word has to get out.

Good luck, Sam.



**Miss Reed**

*If you have a question for Miss Reed, please email her at [swellcourt@verizon.net](mailto:swellcourt@verizon.net), or send a letter to her c/o Rosenberg, 9 Stillwell Court, Bridgewater, NJ 08807.*

## From the Director's Chair

The new fiscal year is upon us and although we are still in the midst of the dog days of summer, there is no time to rest...we have so much to do.

We have more than 150 people waiting to be matched with a volunteer tutor. We desperately need tutors. Our next tutor training begins September 24 so encourage people you know to get involved and join us.

We are also in need of trainers. If anyone would like to become a trainer please contact the office as soon as possible.

With the growth of the organization, the need for additional resources has increased greatly. We have a number of initiatives we hope everyone will take part in:

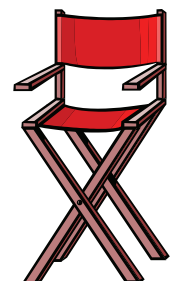
- The first 100 people to make an "online" gift of \$50 or more will receive a free LVSC t-shirt
- We are collecting used, unwanted clothing in our new clothing donation bins
- We are looking to place additional clothing bins and are offering a "finder's fee" for anyone interested
- You can donate your used vehicle to LVSC and receive a tax deduction for the full blue book value of the vehicle
- Anyone who donates OR raises a total of \$1,000 for LVSC will be recognized as a "Champion of Literacy"

By now I hope all of you have had an opportunity to venture onto our new web site – [www.LiteracySomerset.org](http://www.LiteracySomerset.org). It allows both volunteer tutors and students to apply directly online. Tutors can also submit their hours to the office directly through the website.

The newest feature is our new "Tutor Mentoring Program" which will be hosted by trainer extraordinaire, Catherine Mitch. You can post questions for Catherine and she will be available to provide the answers right on the website. So be sure to go to the website and sign up.

We value the efforts of all of our volunteers. Thank you for your continued support.

*Alan*



# Rosa's Story: My Learning Journey

I feel that my English communication and comprehension skills are greatly improved since I started receiving tutoring services through Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County.

I am able to understand some idioms that I heard at my workplace before, but did not know the meaning of. I am able to use some of these idioms during conversations with my co-workers. This learning experience has given me a better understanding of how to use idioms and phrases properly. For instance, one day I heard my director say that "it will be a red tape" when she was referring about a new proposed policy being approved and implemented, and I said to myself, "What that heck she is talking about?" I thought that literally a red tape or red sticker needed to be placed on the proposal so it can be approved.

Another time, I saw the words "apprise" and "keep me abreast", and I was almost sure to know the meaning of these two words. But, guess what, I was completely wrong. I thought that "apprise" meaning was appraisal, and "keep me abreast" meaning was keep away from my breast or be careful with my breast.

Although I saw the meaning of "appraise" in the dictionary, I did not feel comfortable using it during conversations with other people. However, through examples and homework that my tutor gave me, I am able to use these new words now.

I am so grateful to my tutor for finding the ways and techniques to better help me in this learning process. For example, in the beginning of classes she asked me questions such as personal goals, areas in which I needed help the most, preference in using learning material. Telling my tutor that I was a visual learner helped her to prepare visual elements for our meetings. For example she placed a picture of each new vocabulary word on the back of an index card, which greatly helped me to memorized better the new words.

I feel very embarrassed when I mispronounce or misuse a certain English word during conversation with other people. But my tutor said that some native English speakers

also make mistakes. Even North American people do not speak proper English sometimes. It feels good inside knowing that I am not the only one in making mistakes when speaking English. Most of all, I am learning that we learn from our mistakes.

Thanks to the teaching methodology that my tutor has utilized I have been able to add new words to my daily vocabulary.

It is always pleasant to hear encouraging words from my tutor. This gesture inspires me to continue making the effort to enhance my communication skills. Every week, I look forward to meet with my tutor, as I always learn something new during our meetings. I could now say that speaking in English with some people puts me in seventh heaven. I test myself when I speak with others about what I have learned and try not to make the same mistakes I made in the past.

I did not want to read in English before, because I got frustrated when I did not know the meaning of certain words. Thanks to my tutor who introduced the "context clues" in our lessons plan, I am able to use them and understand what I am reading. I am paying more attention to the sentences before and after the unknown words that point me to the context clues. I am not getting frustrated and closing the books or magazines when I do not understand something as I did before. I am cultivating the habit of reading more often, so I can learn

more new words. I feel more confident when speaking English with people in public now. However, I feel that I still have some difficulty in using some idioms and understanding the "American Humor" in some comedy shows.

I feel so grateful to Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County for giving me the opportunity to improve my English as a second language. I really wish that people who are eager in expanding their English skills have the opportunity to benefit from these marvelous services.

**Rosa was a speaker at the LVSC Annual Meeting.**



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LVSC has created new literacy-related categories to highlight the levels of giving of our many generous donors.

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**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. Currently, we have collection bins for you to deposit any of your unwanted used clothes in Manville, Somerset and Franklin Township. Email [info@literacysomerset.org](mailto:info@literacysomerset.org) or call 908-725-5430 for bin locations.

We are also searching for more locations for our clothing donation bins. Email or call the office to find out how you can help with our clothing drive.