



LITERACY VOLUNTEERS of Charlottesville/Albemarle

The Learning Continues

Tutors remain connected to each other and LVCA staff through one of several weekly Zoom meetings. During the first few weeks of the COVID-19 shutdown, approximately 55 tutors have participated in an online event.



Connecting Students to Resources

During the shutdown, LVCA has connected students to educational resources and provided subscriptions to online English language programs. We are encouraging students to keep up their work with their tutors, whether it is practicing on the phone or learning to write an email. In addition to educational resources, LVCA supplies our students weekly with information and referrals to help them meet their basic needs during this time.

For many of our students, however, the most valuable resource they have is their connection with their tutor. Navigating through our community systems to find available resources is a great context for learning the English language and how our government and social service systems work. Many of our students are learning how to fill out forms, make phone calls and register for services.



Our hearts go out to all who have been impacted by COVID-19. To our students, volunteers, and contributors, we miss you and want to stay in touch! We need to stay connected, now more than ever, in this time of physical distancing. We are delighted to report that many of our student/tutor pairs are figuring out new ways to learn with the help of technology. Tutors are gathering regularly via zoom to connect and discuss their progress.

The staff has rearranged priorities, tackling several projects that usually stay on the back burner. Most notably, we are developing a few online training modules for our volunteers to augment our usual in-person sessions, and we are converting to a new program database. These projects will help our organizational infrastructure and make us more efficient and effective when we resume. Although we have been sidetracked by our grief over the loss of what was “normal” for each of us, our goal is to come out of this crisis a stronger organization with more learning tools in our toolbox.

We have lots of concerns about our students and volunteers. Traditionally in times of great unemployment, the demand for LVCA services increases enormously— how can we respond to the expected demand if we lose financial resources? We were already going to be facing financial challenges for the next fiscal year— how will an economic downturn affect LVCA?

The staff and board continue to meet regularly to plan for all sorts of contingencies, and I welcome any thoughts you might have. In the meantime, please focus on your own physical and mental health and stay well. Please stay in touch.

—Ellen Osborne, Executive Director

LVCA Adopts Another Communication Tool

In an attempt to keep in contact with our students who do not have email addresses, LVCA has subscribed to a web-based texting service. Almost all of our students have access to a smartphone and can receive texts. We will text students links to online learning sites, our student newsletter, and other resources. Staff can send, monitor, and

respond to student replies on the internet, without needing to use personal cell phones.

We also anticipate occasionally using this service to reach tutors via text, particularly with alerts regarding weather-related closures.

Both tutors and students can easily opt out of text messaging if they prefer.

If you want to get our texts, let the office know to add you to the list and make sure we have your cell phone number. “We’ve been wanting to establish this communication method for a while, but we were much more motivated to do this since we miss seeing our students and tutors in the office,” said Program Manager Steven Reid.



Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/ Albemarle

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Tutors Adapt to Technology

Transitioning to online learning can be daunting, but for Jack and Nyi Nyi, it was an opportunity to learn something new together and continue the journey they started last summer. After Nyi Nyi got his U.S. citizenship with Jack's help, they transitioned into a more traditional English language education. In March, they worked on "how often" and "how long" and adverbs of frequency. But instead of an LVCA classroom, their lessons took place on FaceTime.

"Ours is probably the caveman's version of online," Jack says. "Nyi Nyi has a smartphone but no computer or printer. I am using FaceTime and plain old Google. I texted the first week's lesson to him, but it wasn't possible to do FaceTime and read the exercises at the same time. So, I mailed him copies of the complete Unit 5 lessons. We now have the luxury of actual physical pages in front of us," he says.

Many tutors facing online instruction wonder, "How do we get started? What technology

do we have? What skills do we both need to transition to online learning?" It can seem overwhelming, but for Jack and Nyi Nyi, the challenge has been part of the fun of working together. "I do think that the whole process is working," Jack says.



Welcome New Intern!

Russell Finelsen will be an intern at LVCA throughout the summer. He has been tutoring for over a year, and he is a third-year student at UVA studying curriculum and instruction. Russell will

be helping develop LVCA's online tutor training modules, and he gets assistance in his home office from his dog "Maks."

LVCA Finances

The economic repercussions of COVID-19 reverberate far and wide. The staff and board of LVCA recognize that many people have immediate needs such as food and shelter, and we will not compete with other nonprofits for those new, local, emergency funding pools that are being established. As things stabilize, however, our mission becomes more important than ever in supporting the long-term language and employment needs of our community. **Please ensure the health of the organization by donating online at**

www.literacyforall.org/donate

or mailing a check to LVCA, 233 4th Street NW, Suite L, Charlottesville, VA 22903. As of now, LVCA intends to keep our current staffing level to support our learners and volunteers.

wordplay
Charlottesville's Game Show for Trivia Lovers

New Date: September 30, 2020

Which means—You can still sign up a team!

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Nyi Nyi and Jack, at Nyi Nyi's citizenship ceremony earlier this year

How to stay in touch with LVCA:



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