

## Message from the Executive Director

Our new program coordinator is a quilter. It's fun to hear Kate talk about the different quilts she has made and what inspires her designs.

As she spoke about stitching pieces of fabric into patterns, I thought about how our students stitch English words into sentences.

Beginning students start by learning simple words they may use every day. All of our students can tell time, but they may not know terms like half-past and quarter-to. It can be important to know emergency words like fire, police, and to understand severe weather warnings. They learn the names of days, months, seasons, and other common nouns.

Once they have pieces of English, they can stitch color into their speech by expanding their vocabulary and using adjectives to describe words.

Before you know it, students are using nouns, verbs, and adjectives to form sentences, and English communication begins to take shape.

Learning English is not a quick process – neither is quilting – but with some patience, bit and pieces of language can be used to communicate something beautiful.



Peg Coker, Executive Director



Kate Balogh's "Votes for Women" quilt commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### TUTOR TRAINING

VISIT [HTTPS://WWW.LV.FV.ORG/BECOME-A-TUTOR](https://www.lvfv.org/become-a-tutor)  
OUR 2022 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE WILL BE POSTED ONCE SPACE IS BOOKED.

### DONORS' BREAKFAST

NOVEMBER 2021 CANCELLED

### GIVING TUESDAY

NOVEMBER 30

### TRIVIA BEE FOR LITERACY

MARCH 19, 2022 FINGERS CROSSED  
[HTTPS://WWW.LV.FV.ORG/TRIVIA-BEE](https://www.lvfv.org/trivia-bee)

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### Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley

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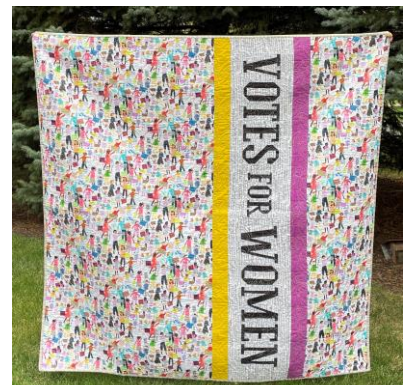


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The reverse is as striking as the front.



## Meet Kate Balogh, L VFV Program Coordinator

Knowledgeable, creative, and energetic are a few of the words that describe our new program coordinator, Kate Balogh. You can call or text her at 630-584-2811 or send an email to [kate@lvfv.org](mailto:kate@lvfv.org). Her flexible, 30-hour work week has her working Monday and Tuesday afternoons and all day Thursday and Friday.

Kate has some great experience. She comes to us from College of DuPage where she works as a Senior Academic Assistant. She provides college-level, one-on-one coaching in writing, reading, and English acquisition both virtually and in person.

Early in her career, she was a high school teacher at the Islamic Foundation School in Villa Park. She left her teaching job when the school gave her space to develop a literacy center where she managed four faculty tutors, lead tutor training sessions, and conducted quarterly tutor evaluations.

Our former program coordinator, Margarita Jimenez, is enjoying retirement with her husband, but she may decide to volunteer. We are looking for the perfect student for her to tutor.

## Welcome to the board, Liz Prignano

We are excited to have Liz Prignano join the L VFV board of directors. She retired from AT&T in 2011 after working 35+ years for the Bell system. Currently, she is the owner and business manager of South Elgin Budokan Martial Arts. She was a dedicated volunteer tutor and is an avid L VFV supporter.

*Q: Why did you decide to accept a position on the board?*

A: I have always been a volunteer for something and chose L VFV when I moved to St. Charles in 1994. I admire what the L VFV stands for: making a positive difference in peoples' lives. Working seven days a week, I often find it difficult to volunteer, but I've wanted to become more active in the community and thought this would be a good opportunity. I found it hard to say no.

*Q: Tell me about the students you have tutored.*

A: It's been some time since I had students, but my experience as a tutor was rewarding. I had three or four students. Two I specifically remember. Maria was a lovely lady from Mexico who met her goal of becoming a U.S. citizen. My husband and I were invited to several of their family celebrations, and we learned a bit about the Hispanic culture. I also recall working with Stacy. Stacy was a doctor in Lithuania. She came to the United States with her family through a Lithuanian visa lottery. She worked here as a caregiver for a home care company and was studying English so she could go to medical school and be a doctor here.

*Q: As a board member, what have you enjoyed so far?*

A: I've enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm of the staff and board members as they talk about the successes of students and tutors and also hearing different points of views on how we can help keep things moving. I look forward to everything opening up so we can get back to post-COVID face-to-face activities again.



## Students succeed despite pandemic complications

COVID-19 may have complicated how often tutors and students can meet, but nothing seems to stop our students' desire to succeed.



Our new fiscal year is underway. Since July 1, eight additional students have become employed, three landed second jobs, and five received job promotions. We admire our students' drive and look forward to chalking up many more successes in fiscal year 2022.

## Remote Lessons – How is that working?

Last winter, we were thrilled to announce that LVFV had received a grant from the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley for 30 Chromebooks. We spent the spring and summer helping students sign up for Google accounts and connecting them with tutors remotely. About half of our tutors and students are continuing to meet via Zoom, WhatsApp, and Facetime. So we asked tutors, "How is that working?"

*"It has worked well. We both still prefer to meet in person, weather permitting, but I'll tell you, he is one busy man. More often than not these days, we meet via Zoom."* –Susan M.

*"Jone and I are still meeting every week on Zoom. It has been working out well. Eventually, we will probably start meeting in person but for now Zoom has not presented any problems and it is convenient..."* --Jennifer R.

*"Yes, Nancy and I are still meeting almost exclusively on Zoom 2x's a week. This is her preference. We meet maybe once a month at a Dunkin' Donuts near where she lives primarily so I can provide her some new workbooks. I can say though that our 'in person' meetings seem to be more effective/productive than virtual. If Nancy was a more advanced student it may be less of an issue. We are still working out vowel sounds and I think some of the nuance is lost via Zoom and little speakers in tablet or cell phone."* –Mark M.

How are remote lessons working? So far, so good!

## Student focus groups provide valuable insights

Like most businesses and non-profit groups, LVFV is rebuilding. Enrollment statistics from early 2021 showed that our tutor enrollments grew as vaccination rates increased, but student enrollments grew at a slower rate. We needed to find out why students were not returning to the program and what we could do to encourage enrollment.

Who could we ask? Our students, of course! We prepared to conduct focus groups, invited 14 students to join us for dinner, and started asking questions.



One of our focus group dinners was held at Lupita's Cocina in LaFox, which is owned by former student Jose Quintero.

**Non-English speakers rely on word-of-mouth referral.** We asked about the methods we use to reach potential students. They said word-of-mouth is the most reliable source of information for people who need help. That's not surprising. We all seek the advice of others when making service or product choices.

**Adult students know that English communication improves earning potential.** When asked what motivates people to improve their English, better communication for job growth was the leading reason, but many learn English to help their family. They want to *help* their children - rather than *rely* on their children - when it comes to speaking English.

**The reasons why adults might not seek help were personal.** Some don't know that one-to-one tutoring is offered in our community. Others are afraid that a teacher won't have the passion to help them. Work conflict was given as a major reason, especially among adults who work more than one job. Adults who are surrounded by people who speak their language at work, home, and church may not be motivated to learn English.

It was gratifying to hear personal stories of triumph. Each student could recall the exact event that made them realize that learning English was the key to success.

Students in the focus group were so excited about advertising possibilities that they offered to promote the program among their peers right away. In fact, most of the 16 students we currently have on our waiting list were referred by family and friends.

Many thanks to the students who participated in the focus groups and to Gail Straus of GKS Consulting, Jane Cooper of Cooper Hong Inc., and Edith Craig, Director of the St. Charles Public Library for serving as focus group moderators.

### Want more information about Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley?

For more information about:

- Being a tutor
- Being a student
- Making a financial donation
- Sharing your ideas

Visit our website [www.lvfv.org](http://www.lvfv.org) for more information.  
We look forward to hearing from you!

**Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley**

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