

Message from the Executive Director

OK. I'm ready to acknowledge that summer has come to a close. When Christmas holiday items hit the retail shelves last week, I realized that it was time to hang up my flip flops.

Some of my fellow non-profits are way ahead of me. At the Nun Lunch today, some agencies said they are planning for requests that will be made as the weather gets cooler.

What's the Nun Lunch? It is a once-a-month brown bag lunch held at Lazarus House, our local homeless shelter. It was started by a group of nuns who felt that non-profits needed a forum where they could share information about resources. The nuns have retired, but the luncheons go on.

This month, a person from The Salvation Army talked about programs that offer home heating assistance to qualifying residents. Many of our students work two or three jobs to help make ends meet. Could they spend a little more time with their families if they could get help with their heating bill?

I learned about free early-childhood screenings for low-income children. I thought about our Iraqi and Afghan students and their families who have been through war trauma. Would they benefit if they knew about development delays their children may be experiencing?

The key is that residents must qualify. While we can't determine this, we can point our students to the people who can help if we are aware of the opportunities.

I was recently reminded of an African proverb, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." In this newsletter you will read about how our students are working to improve their English so they can provide for their families, send their children to good schools, and contribute to our economy. I'm proud that our community wants to help them walk their path.



Peg Coker
Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

DONORS' BREAKFAST

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3
9:00AM TO 10:30AM
BALTRIA VINTAGE AUTO GALLERY
4200 E. MAIN STREET
ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS 60174

ST. CHARLES CHAMBER NON-PROFIT

AWARENESS NIGHT

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27
6:30PM TO 8:00PM
ARCADA THEATER
105 E. MAIN STREET
ST. CHARLES, IL 60174

TUTOR TRAINING

MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS
JANUARY 21, 23, 28, AND 30
6:30PM TO 9:00PM
ST. CHARLES PUBLIC LIBRARY

Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley

One South Sixth Avenue
St. Charles, Illinois 60174
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Did you know?
According to the Independent
Sector, the value of a
volunteer hour is up 2.2%.
It's now \$24.69!

Literacy Tutors and Students Honored at Recognition Night

There was no mistaking it. This was a celebration. From the tables with treats to the folks sporting balloon hats and crowns, it was clear everyone was here for a party!

Literacy Volunteers of Fox Valley met on June 25 at Hosanna! Lutheran Church in St. Charles to recognize the accomplishments of both the students and tutors.

Before the “business” part of the evening, groups met to socialize. They took pictures, sampled snacks, and picked seats at the tables. Children moved around freely and checked out the raffle prizes.

After being greeted by Peg Coker, certificates of recognition were handed out. Twenty-four students were applauded for their dedication and progress. Thirty-three tutors accepted thanks from their students for patience and assistance.

Also lauded for their efforts were four students who submitted entries to the writing contest: Sonia Lopez, Daniel Castellanos, Juanita Mora and Angine Williams. Sonia was ultimately selected.



Student **Bella Dagva** nominated her tutor, **Dalila McClure**, for a Certificate of Appreciation.



Thanks to **Altrusa International of the Fox Valley** for hosting our event.

Her entry told of her first days in America. She and her husband were virtually alone to find their way. And she particularly missed her family when they had their first child.

Sonia’s husband was visibly moved by her progress and her efforts. So moved, in fact, that he plans to seek a tutor for himself.

If anyone needed an example of enthusiasm, Drago Gudovic, originally from Serbia, was there and shared his story with those at his table. When he first came to America, he did not know English. He first landed in Miami where he realized it would be more important to know Spanish!

But after he moved permanently to the Chicago area about 5 years ago, his English skills took off. He is finishing his year as the president of Toastmasters in St. Charles.

Once the awards and prizes had been distributed, those attending gathered for photos and to say goodnight. Next year will offer another evening of recognition and fun.

Recognition Night Winning Entry: *When I arrive at USA*

By: **Sonia Lopez**

When I came to this country I didn't know anything of the English language so things become hard. One hard part of my life was when I started to live here practically alone, no family, no friends no body close. Just my husband and me that was without a doubt difficult for us. Another issue was when I had my first born without my mother. I remember when I did not know anything about having babys I really was scared but had to be strong. Twelve months later I had my second born it was tremendous because having two babys so close together was scary thank God I made it. So for that I am proud of my self. But the most frustrating thing was when my kiddos started school (preschool) I was fearful because I did not know anything about the school system. I remember when I was thinking "Now how can I help my kids. Please God help me!!!" but I was looking for people who could speak both languages who could help me. So little by little I learned about the school system. Other challenge was when I wanted to go with my kids to school as a volunteer. Indeed I still did not know anything so I asked Francisco my husband (he knew little bit English) to translate how could I ask questions. So I had to steel myself and I tried to speak English for first time and I think I did it. I started to go to the school with my kids everyday for two full years. That helped me to learn a little English and also how they worked with preschool-aged children it was good to know because that helped me to raise my own kids. Indeed the thing most important I learned by my self was don't stop even when you feel fear, because fear just makes you lose.



Writing contest winner **Sonia Lopez** with husband Francisco and tutor **Sandy Spiegel**.

LVFV Welcomes New Tutor Trainer



LVFV's newest tutor trainer, **Mary Benson**.

As a long-time tutor and teacher, Mary Benson has a lot of insight to pass on to others. She recently joined the ranks of tutor trainers for Literacy Volunteers of Fox Valley. "I began tutoring 14 years ago," Mary said, "when my daughter left for college. I had been interested in becoming a tutor for several years. I felt I would be a good match because of my background." That "background" includes a master's degree in adult education from Northern Illinois University. She has taught ESL and ABE (Adult Basic Education) at Waubensee Community College.

"I am retired from Accenture Learning in St. Charles," Mary said. She worked there for 18 years as a learning coach and training manager. And now she will use that experience training tutors for LVFV. Mary has completed one round of training and is encouraged by the volunteers she coached. "I like to stress how much a tutor will learn about themselves and others through the experience."

What about her own experiences tutoring? One that stands out was helping her student learn medical and hospital terms when she was expecting her baby. An unexpected C section was less traumatic because of that. "We had covered the vocabulary so she could understand the nurses and doctors."

Mary said when Peg Coker approached her about becoming a trainer, it sounded like a perfect match!

Learning from Our Students: *Dashain*

Dashain is a 15-day long Hindu festival in Nepal that takes place in late September and early October. It is the biggest festival of the year in Nepal and it glorifies the triumph of good over evil. The goddess of Durga and her manifestations are worshipped and there is emphasis placed on family gatherings and renewal of community ties. Schools and government offices are closed for the entire festival.

Buying new things is a huge part of the festival. This ranges from new clothing to new homes and new scooters, as well as live chickens, pigs, and goats. During the festival, families come together to pray for health, prosperity, and happiness. An abundance of food and drink is shared during the festival and there is much singing, dancing, and laughing. There are also areas in communities where people gather to enjoy locally-built

Ferris wheels and bamboo swings that are made just for the Dashain.



The tradition of swinging, shown above, is a long-standing tradition been enjoyed by young and old on Dashain. For more information visit: <https://bit.ly/2EqGNF1>

Certain days of the festival carry special significance. These include Day 1 (Ghatasthapana dashain), Day 7 (Fulpati), Day 8 (Maha Asthami), Day 9 (Nawami), Day 10 (Bijaya Dashami or Vijaya Dashami), and Day 15 (Kojagrata). Various items used in these days include such things as holy water, banana stalks, buffalos, goats, and rice. Dashain is sometimes criticized because many animals are slaughtered during the festival. The belief behind this practice is that offerings of fresh blood will appease goddess Durga.

On the final day of Dashain, people stay at home and rest. After Dashain, life goes back to normal.

Going Beyond Literacy: *ECC Job Services*

For many of our students, one of the primary motivations for learning English is to improve their job prospects. One way Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley assists students is by partnering with local organizations such as Elgin Community College (ECC) Job Services. ECC Job Services provides a central network of local job postings to students and alumni, but it is also available to community residents. LVFV students can register with career development services and create a login ID and password on their website. They can also find additional information on career exploration, a personalized online planning tool, personality typing, and even one-on-one career counseling. If your student is looking for a job, be sure to check it out with them. It's a great way to see what jobs are available and identify other skills needed to succeed in the workforce.

For more information, visit:

<https://elgin.edu/life-at-ecc/career-development-services/college-central-network-job-listings/>



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Tutor/Student Spotlight

Dipak Basnet, *Student*

Q. Where are you from?

I came from Nepal. When I lived there, I lived with my family and went to a government school. I'm the first one in my family to graduate from high school!

Q. How long have you lived in the United States and what do you do?

I came to the United States seven years ago. I work in a restaurant six days every week.

Q. Why did you want to learn English?

If I can learn to speak more English, it will lead to opportunities for a better life.

Q. Did you know any English when you came to the U.S.?

I did speak just a little but not much. I knew words such as "hello" and "goodbye."

Q. Congratulations on becoming a U.S. citizen on September 19, 2018! What made you decide to become a U.S. citizen?

Again, it is about opportunity. I think being a U.S. citizen will help me find opportunities to work hard and do well in life. I would also like it if other people in my family could come to the U.S. someday. Being a citizen might help with that.

Q. How long have you been learning with Karla?

She has been my tutor since February 2018. My first goal with Karla was to become a U.S. citizen. My next goal is to attend community college. She will help me with that.

Q. If you had a friend who was thinking about learning English with Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley, but wasn't really sure, what would you say?

It is nice to meet with my tutor and I have found most people here to be friendly and helpful.

Karla Poremba, *Tutor*

Q. How long have you tutored? I went through tutor training in January 2018 and started meeting with Dipak in February.

Q. Why did you decide to tutor?

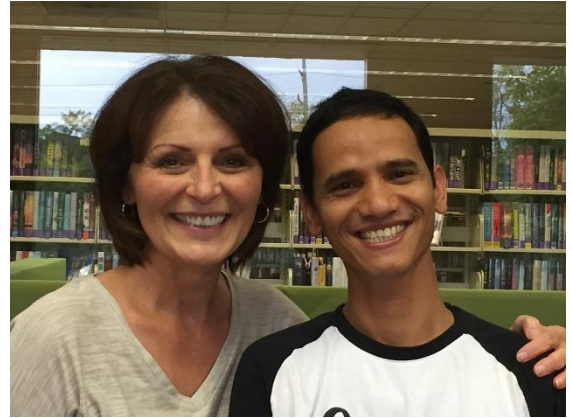
After I retired, I wanted to do something that would use my skills as a teacher. I taught for many years, but always in a classroom setting, and not one-on-one, as we do at Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley. Working with adults individually is very different than working with children in a classroom setting. The experience has been very rewarding for me.

Q. What do you like best about tutoring?

It has been a privilege to get to know Dipak and help him learn more about the English language and the citizenship process. I have learned a lot from him as well, so this is not a one-way street. So much about being a tutor is about creating relationships that make a difference in another human being's life.

Q. If someone was thinking about becoming a tutor but wasn't sure, what would you say?

The training is excellent and there are extensive resources available to tutors. You truly don't need to be a teacher or know another language to have a positive experience with Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley. I would definitely encourage anyone on the fence to give a try. The experience has been very rewarding for me.



Dipak Basnet, right, with his tutor Karla Poremba.

We Want to Hear from You!

Know someone who deserves the “spotlight” or have an article you would like to see in this newsletter?

Send your suggestions to info@lvfv.org.

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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 and click on **Contact Us**. We look forward to hearing from you!

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info@lvfv.org.

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