



Literacy Council of Northern Virginia

Fall 2010

Literacy Lines

Student Spotlight: Gaby Morales

by Alicia Nieves

As one of LCNV's four new AmeriCorps members, I have met countless people over the last few weeks who are connected to the organization in some way or another, be they program managers or IT specialists, volunteer tutors or BEST Plus testers, teachers or classroom aides. It has been amazing for me to experience the passion of a mission-driven organization like LCNV.

As AmeriCorps members, we are just beginning our teaching experiences, but our students have already made huge impressions on us. One student I've gotten to know particularly well is Gaby Morales. She moved to Virginia from Bolivia ten years ago and began taking the Family Learning class with LCNV this

session. While her own son is grown and lives in Bolivia, Gaby attends our class so she can gain the English skills necessary to help the children she works with in her job as a nanny. One of Gaby's charges is taking a Spanish class in fifth grade this year, and Gaby beamed with pride when she described how she is finally able to help the girl with her studies. When Gaby is finished helping the kids, then the kids help Gaby with her English homework. I was really excited to learn that Gaby is bonding with the kids she works with over language and literacy. Gaby is one of our more advanced students, and she shared with me that next year she will prepare for her citizenship exam. When the time comes for Gaby to take her exam, she will likely move



Currently excelling in the Family Learning Program, Gaby Morales is gearing up to study for the citizenship exam.

into our tutoring program, where she will receive one-on-one instruction in the specific material she will need to know. Until then, she is a joy to have in our Family Learning Program at Connections for Hope!

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VAACE Conference and Board Appointment

by Erin Finn

On October 10, I began my first day as the new ESOL Special Interest Group Chair for the Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) by attending a pre-conference Board meeting. It was exhilarating to join several other Virginia adult education colleagues to discuss what is new and current in the field across the state. The main focus of the meeting was to get ready for the big event—the annual VAACE Conference—which was to occur over the next several days, from October 11-13.

During the conference, time was set aside for special group meetings, which allowed me to confer with several ESOL educators representing Virginia Beach, Charlottesville, and Northern Virginia. There were several consistent themes between programs such as a growing need for English language instruction with increasingly limited resources, assessment requirements causing disconnects

See VAACE, pg.3

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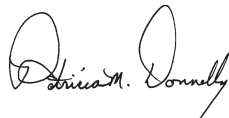
As the Seasons Change the Need Remains the Same

The fall is such a busy time of year. No sooner do we get everyone back to school and settled in than we launch into the holiday season. As we prepare to take on the busy calendar ahead, let's perhaps pause for a moment and think of what this time of year would be like if we couldn't read, if we couldn't make sense of the permission slips and report cards our children bring home from school, if we couldn't shop on-line for holiday gifts, write and address greeting cards, or simply make sense of the mail that gets delivered to our houses each day. The ability to read is so easy for us to overlook, because life without it is so hard to conceive.

So as the 2010 holiday season approaches, I ask you to consider giving the gift of literacy to an adult in your community who relies on the English language and literacy programs the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia provides. It takes very little to make a difference in the future of an adult learner; your gift is leveraged by the extraordinary contributions of our volunteers. A \$50.00 donation will cover the cost of books for an adult in our ESOL classroom program or Family Learning Program; a \$100 gift will help train two new Basic Literacy tutors. If you are able to give \$500, then you are eligible to receive a 40% tax credit on your Virginia State Taxes—the Council is part of the Neighborhood Assistance Program (for more information on the program, please visit our website at <http://www.lcnv.org/nap/index.cfm>).

We've also been very fortunate in receiving a new individual gift challenge. This challenge grant means that all new individual gifts of \$500 or more will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$10,000. Making the pot sweeter, these new donors are also eligible for the 40% tax credit. So if you haven't considered LCNV in your charitable giving in the past, now is a great time to do so. To make giving the gift of literacy simpler and more convenient, we're adding a credit card donation feature to our website, which will allow you to donate online with the added benefit of incurring no outside vendor fees. We will send everyone the link to this feature as soon as it's up and running.

Simply reading this letter, and knowing you have the information to make a decision about giving, is something to be grateful for. Please consider passing that gift of literacy on to another. Enjoy this beautiful time of year and as always, thank you for all your support. It makes a world of difference.



Patricia M. Donnelly
Executive Director

New Board Members

by Mary Ann Nocerino

The Board of Directors warmly welcomed new board members Dawood Nagda and Erica Roque during their September meeting.

Dawood Nagda is a professional consultant with Deloitte with expertise in strategic management and technology consulting including performance management, financial planning, and business intelligence. Previously, he has served as a board member at the Illinois Community College Board. Dawood grew up in the Middle East and Asia. "I have seen the positive impact of literacy on people's economic, social, and personal lives," he said. "As such, I am very enthusiastic about supporting the mission of the LCNV."

Erica Roque had up-close experience with LCNV when she conducted the financial audit of the Council in her previous position with Halt, Buzas & Powell, Ltd. After working as a CPA for six years she began graduate studies to earn a Juris Doctorate. Currently she is in her third year of law school at George Mason University while working part-time with a DC law firm. Erica wants to contribute her skills and time to the LCNV, "an organization that is providing the community with benefits that impact not only the present but also the future of our community."

Dawood and Erica's enthusiasm and broad range of skills, experience, and expertise are sure to be an asset to the Literacy Council in the years ahead. We are so glad they have joined us and warmly welcome them both.

Volunteer Spotlight: Stephen Alexander

by Belle Peñaranda

Recent college graduate Stephen Alexander has spent the last year or so of his life doing some interesting things – volunteering on an organic farm in Oregon, working at a bakery, interning and traveling to Gambia. In the middle of these adventures, he has managed to find time to volunteer as an ESOL tutor for LCNV. Since last fall, he has worked with Fatna Lahmami, a learner from Morocco.

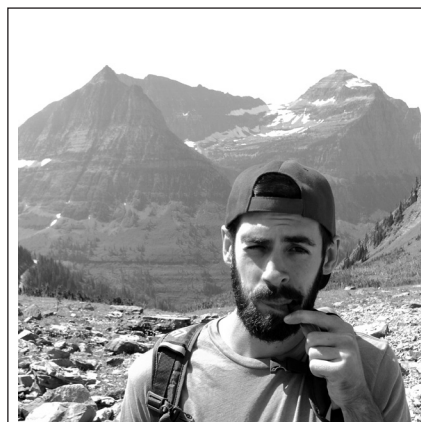
It was during his travels abroad that Stephen became motivated to become an ESOL tutor. He spent some time in Mexico studying Spanish, and he recalls how helpful and kind people were to him. "I felt [tutoring] would be a fantastic way to give back to a group of people that could use the assistance."

Stephen and Fatna meet once a week and are working on making stories, verbally describing an event or idea and then putting it to paper. "She has had success and has probably written three or four paragraphs on various subjects since mid-spring," Stephen says of her progress. "The best part for me has been how eager she was to learn! She is so grateful for any help whatsoever and incredibly determined to give everything I throw at her a try!"

One of the highlights of the past year of tutoring was Fatna passing her citizenship exam. This happened when they first started tutoring, so Stephen didn't play a large role in her passing the exam, but it was a wonderful accomplishment nonetheless. Fatna was finally able to return to Morocco and visit close family members for the first time in 18 years.

There aren't many 20-something tutors at LCNV, and Stephen would like to encourage others his age to try tutoring.

He realizes that many people have busy schedules, but when it comes down to it, he believes that it's not too difficult to fit in a lesson once or twice a week. "Tutoring is definitely worth the time investment for both parties," he says.



LCNV benefits enormously from the talent, experience, and dedication provided by volunteers like Stephen.

VAACE, cont. from pg. 1

between placement and progress, and an overall desire to share ideas and practical resources among programs. We discussed trends in the field of adult ESOL education and how VAACE can serve as an advocate for the group. In the end, a list of topics and presentations was created for the national Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference taking place in Norfolk, Virginia, in April 2012. Although there were only a fraction of program representatives attending the meeting, collectively the group served over 8,000 ESOL learners combined last fiscal year.

As the ESOL Special Interest Group Chair, I hope to become a resource and an advocate for all ESOL educators in our state. The next VAACE conference will take place in the spring of 2012.

Donor Spotlight: A Holiday Gift from Macy's

by Stacy Nall



An ongoing LCNV tradition is our Holiday Party for the children and families we serve, featuring festive music, holiday crafts, presents from Santa, and a potluck dinner representing the home countries of our ESOL students. This year, LCNV is proud to announce that our Holiday Party will be sponsored by Macy's, thanks to a \$2,500 local grant made through the store at Tyson's Corner.

According to Joe Vella, director of Corporate Marketing for Macy's, the retail company funds five areas: women's health, HIV prevention, the arts, education, and the environment. Within education, Macy's places a high priority on literacy; for example, over the last six years, Macy's has donated more than 15 million dollars to the national literacy organization Reading is Fundamental. Only through Macy's customers was this possible; during the back-to-school period, shoppers made \$3 donations to Reading is Fundamental in exchange for \$10 store coupons. "The customer," Vella

says, "really is an integral part of our giving back to communities."

"It's very important," he adds, "that our customers know their dollars are staying in the community." To strengthen its commitment to community-based programs, Macy's has recently divided corporate giving among its 69 districts, so that each has their own pool of money to give back to their own neighborhoods. LCNV is grateful that 2,500 of these dollars are benefiting LCNV and the families we serve. We thank Macy's for their generous support this holiday season.

Tutor's Corner

by Elise Bruml

"To what extent should I become involved in my learner's personal life?" This question arises for many tutors at some point in their LCNV experience. It is important for us all to remember that as volunteers and staff in the Council's tutoring programs we are here foremost to help our students acquire the English skills they need to meet their learning goals. We are not equipped to be social workers, legal advisors, or psychiatrists, and it is inappropriate for us to attempt to fill these roles.

But tutoring is not an impersonal pursuit. Students learn best when they feel their tutors are genuinely concerned about them, and the relationship that develops between a tutor and student plays an important role in creating this feeling. As tutors and students grow to know each other, their relationships often become friendships. Learners may begin looking to their tutors for help on a variety of issues apart from developing English skills; and tutors often want to do all they can to help. How to do this appropriately and

usefully turned out to be a major topic of discussion during a recent LCNV in-service. As participants shared their experiences, a consensus emerged about dos and don'ts. It was agreed that tutors should not encourage their students to become dependent on them to resolve their personal problems. It is more appropriate and helpful to provide learners with information about community resources that are better equipped to handle these needs. Fairfax County has a large database (www.fairfaxcountry.gov/rim) of organizations that provide specific services, many of which include interpreters for those who are not yet proficient in English. LCNV can also provide this kind of information.

It is important to empower learners by providing them the tools to resolve their own problems rather than by handling those problems for them. The adage about how giving someone a fish enables them to eat for a day but teaching them how to fish enables them to eat for life may be hackneyed, but it is one we all would do well to follow.

CFC#: 28828

CVC#: 8242

UWNCA#: 8356

LCNV's mission is brought to life increasingly through the contributions of individual donors like you. Workplace giving campaigns are a convenient way to contribute. In Northern Virginia there are three main such campaigns: the **Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)**, the **Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC)**, and the **United Way of the National Capital Area (UWNCA)**. LCNV is registered with all three.

The CFC and CVC are for federal and state employees, respectively, while the UWNCA hosts giving campaigns at many area workplaces. Check with your personnel or HR department to see if yours is among them.

Thank You LCNV Donors

During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2011 (July 1–September 30, 2010), the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia received gifts in the amount of \$100 or more from the following donors:

Government



PUBLIC LIBRARY



The Virginia Department of Education

Community Organizations, Corporations, and Foundations

THE MORRIS & GWENDOLYN CAFRITZ FOUNDATION



Bank of America Matching Gifts Program
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Mary Ann and Joseph Nocerino*
 Susan Schatten
 Andrew Shulman Δ

Gary T. Smith
 Gary Spiegel
 Marilyn E. Stone

* LCNV volunteer during Fiscal Year 2011
 Δ Gift matched by employer

In-kind

County of Fairfax

Thank you to the following organizations for providing workplace giving campaigns which distribute funds from individual donors to LCNV:



Holiday Gift Wrap Coming in December

It's only October, but we're already planning this year's Gift Wrap, held throughout December at area Barnes & Noble and Borders bookstores. A variety of shifts and locations are available, with all supplies provided by the bookstores. This is a great opportunity to spread holiday cheer, practice your gift-wrapping skills, and promote LCNV among the community.

Last December, 237 volunteers for LCNV spent a combined 632 hours wrapping customer's purchases, resulting in \$7,318 in donations to our organization—over twice the amount raised the year before! We hope you'll join us in making this year's Gift Wrap our most successful yet. Call (703) 237-0866 ext. 111 or email volunteers@lcnv.org to learn more about this opportunity.

Volunteer Opportunities

LCNV's programs, trainings, computer labs, library, and administration would not be possible without the help of dedicated volunteers. Please consider helping adults learn to read, write, speak, and understand English by offering your time to support LCNV programs. Even if tutoring or teaching is not for you, we offer many diverse volunteer opportunities to fit a wide variety of interests and schedules. Call (703) 237-0866 ext. 111 or email volunteers@lcnv.org to learn more about these and other volunteer opportunities.

Basic Literacy Tutors

Volunteers are needed to teach English-speaking adults to read and write. Volunteers tutor adults one-to-one in the community for a couple of hours each week. The schedule is very flexible, and no previous teaching or foreign language experience is necessary. A 12-hour training workshop is required. The next sessions are on November 13, 20, and December 4 at 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Ongoing support is provided.

Student Interviewers (ESOL Tutoring Program)

Student Interviewers are needed in Annandale and in the Fairfax County areas of Alexandria. Working closely with LCNV placement advisors, the interviewers will test students receiving ESOL tutoring in order to assess their progress. The schedule is very flexible and training will be provided.

Holiday Gift Wrappers

The holidays are fast approaching! The Literacy Council will once again be raising funds by gift wrapping customers' purchases at local bookstores around the Northern Virginia area in December. Three- to four-hour gift wrap shifts are available, and all supplies are provided by bookstores. This is a great volunteer opportunity for families to do together and the perfect chance to spread holiday cheer and do something good for the community.

ESOL Tutors

Volunteers are needed to teach foreign-born adults to read, write, speak, and understand English and to develop basic English survival skills. Volunteers tutor adults one-to-one in the community for a couple of hours each week. The schedule is very flexible, and no previous teaching or foreign language experience is necessary. An 18-hour training workshop is required. The next sessions are on January 22, 29, and February 5 at 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Ongoing support is provided.

Library Liaisons

Volunteers are needed to establish and maintain a positive working relationship between the Literacy Council and public libraries in the community. Each liaison will be assigned 1–2 libraries in his or her neighborhood, and will mostly be responsible for putting up tutor recruitment flyers (and ensuring that they are replaced in

a timely manner) and communicating with library staff. We ask that volunteers commit to an initial meeting with library staff (30 minutes, but this is negotiable) and subsequent trips to the library 2–3 times each quarter (about 10–12 hours a year) for a minimum of one year. Liaisons are currently needed in Falls Church, McLean, and Arlington.

Reading: A Family Affair (RAFA) Planning Committee Volunteers

The fifth annual RAFA will be taking place next March. We are now forming planning committees for this fabulous and fun event for local families in the community (more information about RAFA can be found at www.lcnv.org/rafa). Committees include decorations, development, publicity, event volunteers, and more. Flexible, creative, outgoing, and dedicated individuals are needed!

Librarians

The Literacy Council is looking for volunteer librarians for our in-house library of Basic Literacy and ESOL material, which is designed to help our volunteer tutors and teachers. The main tasks of the librarians are to prepare and catalog the new books that come in, reshelve books that members return, send out reminders to people who have overdue books, inform program directors about lost books, and share ideas about the library's needs for supplemental material. We are looking for a retired librarian, someone who has volunteered in a library (or in a small library, such as in a church), or just a very organized person who is interested in this volunteer opportunity and can commit to one year. One of our current librarians will be happy to train you.

“[My student] surprised me at the end of a recent session by commenting on the effort it must be for me to prepare for our lessons. I was so stunned that it even occurred to her, and I was so touched by it. I told her that it's so rewarding for me to be helping her that it doesn't even feel like an effort. It's a pleasure to be teaching her, and I am learning a lot as well in the process. Hard to capture in words how I feel about tutoring—it's one of the best things I've ever done.”

— Marla, ESOL tutor

Have some good student news to share?
Send it to success@lcnv.org.

Our New 2010-2011 AmeriCorps Members

by Belle Peñaranda

This year our AmeriCorps grant is providing a record-setting seven members to literacy councils in Northern Virginia to help achieve the mission of teaching adults the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English. Again, LCNV is fortunate to have four enthusiastic members working with our students. LCNV continues to team up with Loudoun Literacy Council in this AmeriCorps grant cycle, which received two AmeriCorps members. BEACON for Adult Literacy in Bristow, VA, joined us for the first time this year and received one member. I'd like to introduce you to the four smart, enthusiastic and hardworking young adults who volunteered to accept the rewarding challenge of working with LCNV students.

Kerrin Epstein comes to us from Moravia, NY. She has "participated in a diverse array of community service activities. Each activity has introduced me to a new segment of the community and has led me down a new community service path." From the very physical activities in Habitat for Humanity to several stints working with at-risk and abused children, Kerrin has already logged many volunteer hours.

Jose Flores is a Northern Virginia local who learned a great deal about LCNV this summer as he worked in the front office as an executive assistant. Impressed by his work ethic and credentials, LCNV encouraged Jose to apply for an AmeriCorps position. His interest in community service originated during the nine years he lived in El Salvador with his grandparents who "seemed to be running their own charity foundation without being recognized as one ... they were not afraid to share their resources and time."

Alicia Nieves comes from a distance: Holland, MI. In her college community of Hamilton, MI, she served for four years as a volunteer Young Life leader with high school students which "helped focus my attention outward instead of just on my personal wants and needs." With a continuing desire to help others through practical application, Alicia joined AmeriCorps to create "relationships with individuals who I can be of help to in my own little way."

Sara Venjohn, from Eagan, MN, brings a rich background. Articulating the effects of just one of her prior experiences, Sara displays the empathy she will bring to the classroom gained from a college study abroad experience. It was a life-changing struggle "to find an identity in a



The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia's 2010-2011 AmeriCorps members are (from left to right): Jose Flores, Kerrin Epstein, Alicia Nieves, and Sara Venjohn.

culture with a language I had not mastered and a complex social code that often seemed impossible to decipher." By the end of her three-month stay in Ecuador, "a land and people that were once vastly foreign started to become home. I began to feel at ease in my own skin."

I'm sure you will agree that our AmeriCorps members bring a wealth of skills and experiences along with their youthful energy to LCNV programs. Come join them in their quest to fulfill the mission of LCNV!

"[My student] told me about the trip she took to the Fair Oaks mall last week. She was very excited because she ... used what we had been studying: 'I went by myself, and I remembered the book and asked "Do you have anything more cheap" and other questions. And the woman understood me!'"

—Betty, ESOL tutor

"[My student], her daughter, and I traveled to USCIS in Fairfax so [my student] could take the citizenship test. After 45 minutes, she came out beaming from ear to ear, showing us the paper that said 'Congratulations! You passed.' She could not wipe the grin off her face. It was so gratifying to see her so elated after working so hard at this for a full 18 months. I am very proud of her."

—Carol, ESOL tutor

Have some good student news to share?
Send it to success@lcnv.org.

Literacy Lines

Calendar of Events

November

Saturday the 13th and 20th and December 4th
Basic Literacy Tutor Training
9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
*James Lee
Community Center

December

Saturday the 4th (attendance at the November 13th and 20th trainings required)
Basic Literacy Tutor Training
9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
*James Lee
Community Center

Holiday Party
Tuesday the 7th
6–8 p.m.
*James Lee
Community Center

Offices Closed
Thursday the 24th,
Monday the 27th, and
Friday the 31st

January

Saturday the 22nd and 29th and February the 5th
ESOL Tutor Training
9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
*James Lee
Community Center

Offices Closed
Monday the 17th
Martin Luther King Day

Save the Date: Saturday, March 19, 2011

Reading: A Family Affair is approaching its **5th year**.

Mark your calendars early—you don't want to miss this special event!

What:

Reading: A Family Affair

When:

Saturday, March 19, 2011
(doors will open at 9:30 a.m.)

Where:

James Lee
Community Center

Cost:

It's **FREE!**

*=James Lee Community Center address: 2855 Annandale Rd., Falls Church, VA, 22042



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