



# LITERACY MATTERS

MAY 2019



Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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## REFLECTIONS FROM BOARD PRESIDENT STEPHEN BENDERNAGEL

(submitted by Stephen Bendernagel)

One night became six years! What started as a simple volunteer night sponsored by my company ultimately became a rewarding journey. It began in mid-career (or so I thought), and ended one year into my official retirement. It started with me and the whole family living on Long Island and now we have all scattered. Ronnie (my wife of 32+ years) and I have retired to the Catskill Mountains. The Literacy Nassau home base was located in Freeport and now there is a new facility in Wantagh. In 2012, I was stuffing popcorn bags at Movie Night. In 2019, I end my tenure as President of the Board of Directors. It has been an amazing experience that has given me rewards that far exceed anything I could have contributed towards the mission.

The point I am trying to make is that no matter where you are in your life, there is always the opportunity to make a difference. Seven years ago, I met Karen Micciche and my life changed. Although my career was focused on business and banking, I had always had a passion for reading and literature. So when the opportunity arose to volunteer for an organization that promotes adult literacy, I wanted to help. Movie night brought Karen and I together. In a lengthy and thoroughly enjoyable

conversation, I asked her why I had not heard of Literacy Nassau before. She responded that "getting the name out" was one of the issues the organization needed to address.

While it may have been a challenge at that time, I don't think that it is much of an issue anymore! There are a lot more people that have heard of us and the results have been amazing. Karen deserves so much of the credit for that! At that first night, I told Karen that she had "gotten to me" and I wanted to do more. Ronnie and I started by taking the tutor workshop together and had the absolute gift of working with some truly inspiring adult students. The fundraising and board membership possibilities followed.

Each chapter of my life is new and yet has recurrent themes. My involvement in the non-profit world has included many challenges but much joy. I am grateful for so many things. I loved our many fundraising events such as (un)Scrabble (and memorizing 15-letter words). Also, the annual Wine Dinner, where with each event we learned a little bit more about wine and a lot more about friendships. I loved seeing the joy on faces of those people honored at Recognition Night. Those people told us that what we were doing meant something.

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## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

The only true constant is change. We know this intrinsically; we feel it every year with the change of seasons. However, sometimes the change is so striking that we are taken aback. That happened to me recently when my daughter Haley celebrated her 7th birthday. If you have been with us awhile, you may remember my announcement in 2011 that I was pregnant. Now, 2 kids and many years later, here we are, with a new building, a program for kids with LD, and staff members, volunteers, and countless students who have come and gone.

I felt it again when my girls got their first, long anticipated softball uniforms. They have spent all this time as spectators of their favorite game and will finally be playing this season. Before I know it, they will be in high school. It's important to celebrate these milestones before they become memories. I hope you will join us to celebrate all your milestones from this past year at our annual Recognition Night on Thursday, May 30th! (Spoiler alert: Haley will be there too!)

*Karen* 😊



Baseball season in the Micciche house now includes our two newest players: Haley and Julie!



## RESOURCE CORNER: HOW TO TEACH WRITING

(submitted by Kim Nau)

At the AOGPE conference in April, I attended a workshop on The Writing Revolution presented by Judith Hochman. I enjoyed her workshop so much that I purchased her book with the same title. Here are some writing principles that can be applied to our Orton Gililngham students and our English language learners:

- Students need explicit instruction in writing
- Sentences are the building blocks of all writing
- When embedded in the content of the curriculum, writing instruction is a powerful tool
- Grammar is best taught in the context of student writing

Judith Hochman makes the analogy, "If you were building a house, would you start with the roof?" We need to begin with the foundation first. Sentence-level work is the engine that propels students from writing the way they speak to using the proper grammatical structures of the English language. Basic sentence activities can:

- Help students understand the concept of a complete sentence
- Help students understand correct word order
- Provides practice with capitalization, punctuation, and using new spelling and vocabulary words

One suggestion is to orally present the concept of a fragment by saying: "we to the store". Ask students to provide a subject and ask a follow up question like, "Does that tell us who went to the store? How can we make this into a complete sentence?" Once they master this orally, you can give them a list of fragments and complete sentences and have them identify them.

Another engaging activity is to give students scrambled sentences. You can put the words on index cards, have students rearrange them in the correct sequence, and then have them write them correctly in their notebook with the correct punctuation and capitalization. Students will enjoy rearranging scrambled sequences of words into correctly ordered sentences. You can include statements, questions, and exclamations to expand their knowledge of sentence variety. Here is an example of a sentence to unscramble: apples Tim oranges bought and

One final activity is to use pictures to help students develop their question skills. Show them a photo and have them come up with three questions based on what they see. Can you come up with some questions about this adorable photo?



## AOGPE CONFERENCE

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

On Saturday, April 6th, I attended the AOGPE Conference along with Karen and Kim and two of our volunteer Orton-Gillingham tutors, Mary and Jen. We traveled to White Plains to meet with other OG tutors from around the United States to learn more about teaching reading and spelling. It was a great day of collaborating with colleagues and getting new ideas to implement in my OG tutoring sessions.

I also learned some interesting statistics about our larger AOGPE community. There are currently 155 fellows (the highest level of OG training and those who are allowed to train others) in the United States, along with 279 certified level and 943 associate level practitioners. Literacy Nassau is currently providing training for volunteers to the associate level.

I attended a workshop called "Game On!" I chose this workshop because my student loves games and I thought I could get some ideas for new games to play. One suggestion was a jeopardy game where each column is a different vowel sound. Each row is the traditional 100, 200, 300, etc. Teams take turns choosing a column and number. When playing the "Reading" version of the game, a word is displayed that has that vowel sound listed on the chosen column. They earn the points if they are able to read the word correctly. In the "Writing" version of the game, the teacher reads a word that has the vowel sound listed on the chosen column. The student then has to spell the word to receive the points.

I chose to attend a spelling workshop because spelling has always been my weak area. I wanted to get as much PD on it as possible to improve on my teaching. It was very interesting and informative. An interesting fact I learned was that students need to see a sight word (a word that doesn't follow the expected sound pattern and must be learned by sight rather than sounded out) 8-65 times before they can remember it. A suggested activity for practicing fluency in reading sight words was to choose six words and to create a 6X6 table in a word document with the words listed in mixed order on each line. Students then read them as quickly as they can while timed by the tutor. The activity is done at every session, working to improve their speed each time.

Overall, I thought the conference was very well planned and offered a variety of workshops that were meaningful to everyone in attendance. It was a great to see how many other people are part of this learning journey and how committed everyone is to helping students learn to read and write.



Literacy Nassau staff and other Orton-Gillingham tutors.

## **STEPHEN BENDERNAGEL FAREWELL (CONT'D.)**

*(continued from cover)*

There were so many other events that were fun and that supported our important mission.

I am grateful to the friends, family and business contacts that always gave their unconditional financial and spiritual support. I have had the absolute privilege of working with incredibly talented board members whose expertise and passion were given unconditionally. I am grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Kornreich, whose generosity allowed Literacy Nassau to accomplish great things.

To Karen and the entire Literacy Nassau staff, thanks for making the Board's job easier. Because the organization is so well run with such a dedicated staff, the Board is always able to focus on the more global issues rather than have to worry about day to day operational things. I am grateful to Capital One, who gave me the opportunity to volunteer in the first place. Finally, I am grateful to my wife and children (Alex and Charlie). Nothing I have accomplished in my life would mean anything if they had not given their full support. Whatever I have accomplished is attributed to the fact that they have always believed in me. Ronnie has always been by my side. I often quote F. Scott Fitzgerald's line when referring to her. "I love her and that's the beginning of everything."

## **JANICE CUDDAHEE, LIFELONG LITERACY CHAMPION**

*(submitted by Karen Micciche)*

I first met Janice Cuddahee 9 years ago at a retreat venue called White Eagle in Hamilton, NY. Janice was the Executive Director of Literacy New York and one of the most passionate, hard working experts in the field of adult literacy I had ever met. I had many opportunities to collaborate and learn from Janice in the years to follow. She knew more than anyone about state funding, the intricacies of the New York State Education Department, and ways to go about advocating for our learners when addressing government officials. A fighter to her core, Janice was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago. I remember the one year she had to miss the annual Literacy New York retreat at White Eagle; we all felt the same awkwardness as a child missing a front tooth might feel. When she returned the following year, it was as if all was right with the world again. However, on April 5th, Janice lost her battle to cancer. Those of us in the fields of adult literacy will never really be the same. She leaves behind a tremendous body of work as her legacy, along with a network of literacy warriors across New York state who will never quite be the same now that she is gone.



Pictured left, Janice poses with Kathy Houghton, new Executive Director of LNY. Right, Janice in more recent days.



Most of all, I am grateful to the 560+ volunteers of Literacy Nassau who have helped to improve the lives of so many people. Because of all of you, mountains have been moved. You have accomplished great things. You volunteer your time not for any type of glory, but simply because it is a good thing to do. Grandparents can now read to their grandchildren. People looking for jobs can better complete job applications. People seeking a new life can speak the English language more fluently. Learning disabilities can be addressed. In short, you have done great things to help people who want to help themselves. The results are immeasurable and will continue for many years to come. Thanks to each and every one of you and I hope to see you all at Recognition Night on May 30th. While my official tenure as Board President has come to an end, I promise to stay in touch and do whatever I can from up here in the Catskills to further the cause. I am proud to have been a small part of this wonderful and important organization. I always like to ascribe to the Boy Scout theme that one should leave a place a little better than the way you found it. I hope that I have done that. Thanks always to everyone and my sincerest wishes to the entire Literacy Nassau organization for continued success.



Pictured above, Stephen poses with a group of volunteers at Capital One's Movie Night in October 2012.



Pictured below, Stephen, Ronnie (right), and Alex Bndernagel (left) are all smiles at (un)Scrabble 2018!

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**



**Warm wishes to the following tutors born in May!:**

Roslyn Armstrong Powell – Sr. Mary Alice Aschenbach – Donna Bennett – Dee Berger – Kathy Berry – Lynne Borah – Carl Borruso – Linda Caginalp – Christopher Cantanno – Carol Ciccarello Regina Dallesandro – Delia A. Espinal – Marjorie Farrell – Joanne Finochiarro – Johnny Gilchrist – Laura Glenz – Maryanne Gogolinski – Sandra Herman – Sherry Jagels – Mindy Kaiser – Barbara Kaplan – Pavneet Kaur Daniel McCarthy – Evelyn Monaco – Grazia Norton – Sandy Palma – June Prisand – Alisa Promakul – Barbara Randall – Kathy Scheiner – Mahendra Shah – Jennifer Southard – Harriet Studness – Ernestine Warner – Sherika Wheatley -Gina Wood Hart



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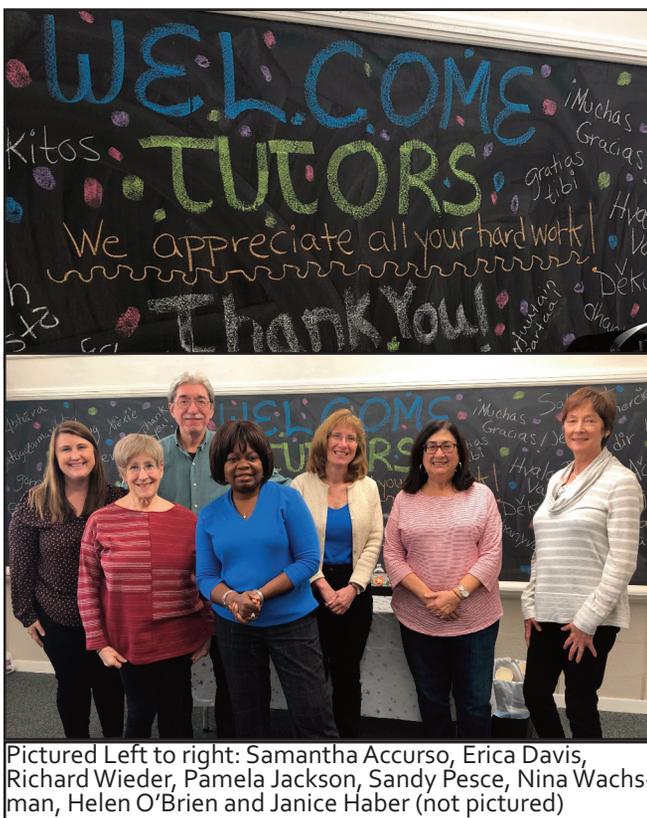
### EASTERN REGION TUTOR APPRECIATION BREAKFAST

*(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)*

On Saturday, April 6th, I hosted a Tutor Appreciation Breakfast for my Eastern Region group. We had a great time talking about our students and their progress. We discussed the challenges that some tutors may have faced as well as the rewards of giving back to our community. I informed our tutors that in our region alone we were able to serve over 125 students. That's an amazing accomplishment. The fact that our tutors give their days, evenings, and weekends to help people learn English is something that needs to be celebrated.

I was happy to have Sandy Pesce in attendance that morning; she has been tutoring with us for 16 years and is a model tutor. Every time I host a new tutor training workshop I always refer new tutors to observe Sandy's group. Sandy has taught our beginner, high beginner, and intermediate small groups. She knows our program very well and prepares our students for our advanced level classes. At our breakfast she had great feedback regarding the curriculum we currently have and other resources she utilizes with her students.

Also there that morning was Pamela Jackson who only began volunteering with us this January. Her eagerness for the program really reflects in her outgoing personality and positive spirit. She taught an intermediate group in Bay Shore and just started a new group in Levittown. She also volunteers her time in our office every Tuesday. There are so many great stories to tell. Thank you to all the tutors that provide their time and dedication to Literacy Nassau. We wouldn't be able to do it without you!



Pictured Left to right: Samantha Accurso, Erica Davis, Richard Wieder, Pamela Jackson, Sandy Pesce, Nina Wachsmann, Helen O'Brien and Janice Haber (not pictured)



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