Essays and Reflections from Literacy Volunteers Students
To All Friends of Literacy Volunteers:

This year I am very pleased once again to present to you our 2019 edition of Hear Our Voices, the annual writing project for adult students tutored by Literacy Volunteers of Greater New Haven, The Valley, Meriden and Wallingford. We are so happy to share with you our students’ thoughts, stories and accomplishments, all of which represent empowerment through improved literacy and true testimony of the impact this has had on their lives. Congratulations to each of these courageous authors! We’re so proud of them!

Hear Our Voices 2019 would not be possible without the dedication of our volunteer tutors. Thanks to every one of them for their commitment and the generous gift of their time and talents. They are truly the backbone of our program!

Finally, thanks to Meghen Fitzgibbons, former Program Manager and Valerie Kilmartin, Volunteer “Extraordinaire” for coordinating the collection of writings, and to our Staff and Board of Directors. It is indeed my great privilege to be part of such a vital organization, which has been impacting literacy for over 40 years, and fosters partnerships with adult learners, tutors, and communities to enable individuals and families to achieve educational, career, and quality of life goals.

We ask you to share the inspiring words in this collection with others- both those who are interested in adult literacy, and those who may not be aware of the full scope of our services and the positive difference they make in Greater New Haven, Meriden, Wallingford, and the Valley communities. Spread the word about our FREE classes and our continuing need for volunteer tutors and community partners.

Know that every donation made in support of our programs brings Literacy Volunteers closer to our goal where we “envision a future in which the power of literacy enables all adults to thrive in their communities”. Again, please enjoy our student’s wonderful literary contributions and read their words of appreciation for the opportunity to live in this great country and feel welcomed!

Sincerely,

Louis D. Perno, MSW
Executive Director
These essays and reflections were written by adult students who attended Literacy classes in Greater New Haven, Meriden, Wallingford and the Valley in 2018-2019. Special thanks go to the dedicated volunteer tutors who worked with their students to create this fascinating collection of personal stories. Special students lead us through cultural and personal experiences, sharing with us their struggles, their achievements, and the richness of their lives. We are grateful to all the students who have worked hard to communicate their unique perspectives through their writing.

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Accomplishments

What I Am Accomplishing

I have been at Literacy Volunteers four years. In that time, I have improved my reading and writing skills. I still have obstacles to overcome in my life now. Challenges are getting easier for me every day. Getting a driver’s license was impossibility a few years ago. Now I am working on the computer practicing for the written driver test. By next year I hope to be on the road. Now that I come this far the quality of my life has become richer and greater. I am feeling better, understanding myself and feeling more spiritual for myself and others today.

Student: Eddie
Country: USA
Tutor: Enid Sherry
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven

My Message to Other Students at Literacy Volunteers

I would tell other students to keep coming because when you keep coming the tutors will help you. I keep coming and see the improvement and it makes me happy.

I wish I could have more time to come but I have to work and pay my bills and help my family.

The more you come, the better you get.

Student: Isseu
Country: Senegal
Tutors: Catherine Miller, Gene Kirsten
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven
A Busy Life
I have been involved in many activities to try to improve myself and my life situation. This year has been very busy for me.

Improving language skills:
Since my stay in this beautiful country, my main duty has been to learn and understand English as a second language, I attended classes in New Haven’s Adult Education Center, and then when I moved to Shelton, I started at Valley Regional Center. Now I’m in the Literacy Volunteers program, I am aware that my skills have improved and I appreciate the existence of this program and my assigned tutor Mr. Stanley Alpert, for his valuable support and patience in this process teaching-learning.

Physical Improvement:
During the first two years of residency some situations affected my health, the most relevant and significant, was the diagnosis of cancer that surprised me 2 years ago and since then after the surgery, every week I go to the programs for survivors that include medical monitoring, evaluations, yoga, art therapy and exercises.

Volunteer work:
I attend the church and participate in spiritual support groups for people in the community with health situations. From our volunteer work as an apostolate group at St. Joseph Church we were suggested to carry out our social work of the church as Eucharistic Ministers for the New Haven Heath Bridgeport Hospital, a designation that has been a blessing for me to belong to the Hospital Volunteer with this mission of life.

Job Opportunities:
I dedicated part of my life to teaching work but now I am facing a new reality. It has not been easy to join a formal
job, despite applying in various positions and various companies. I recently applied for a position that is largely related to my area of work, in the Shelton library system and that by the time you read this article I hope I have been selected for that interesting job.

Regardless of work applications I have a registered company in which I do event planning, meals for restaurants, dress alterations, pants, designed and made costumes, presented projects for business self-management, Recently I presented one project the name Healthy Food in Colors at the St, Vincent Hospital to sell Fruit and Vegetables juices. As an entrepreneur and proactive person I feel that the opportunities are many and varied, considering the limits to achieve the goals are in each person. I feel that you can achieve more with perseverance and determination.

Student: Gladys
Country: Venezuela
Tutor: Stanley Alpert
Site: Plumb Library, Shelton

Communication and Conversation

When our schedule to live in the U.S.A. had been decided, my biggest worry was English communication. I had studied English at school in Japan, but actually I rarely had opportunities to speak English. I did not have confidence to speak English out loud.

When we arrived in Connecticut, our friend told us about ESL classes in New Haven. Since last summer, I have taken Literacy Volunteers classes at Gateway Community College. Now I can make conversation with my classmates and tutors.

Student: Asako
Country: Japan
Tutors: Enid Sherry, Pat Donnelly, Frank Corrigan
Site: Gateway Community College, New Haven
Do Not Enter

Do you know the meaning of sign, “Do not enter?” As you know, it means that you are not allowed to enter when the traffic is one way. Whenever I see this sign, I am reminded of a ridiculous experience I had when I took the road test at the first time. I had never had a driver’s license before I lived in United States. In Korea, there are good metro and city bus connections. So, I never felt inconvenienced by using public transportation. On the other hand, after staying here, I had to drive to go wherever I wanted, so, I tried to take the test for my driver’s license. I passed the vision and knowledge tests on the first try. The road test was the biggest difficulty for me. I tried to practice driving every day. On the day of road test, I felt confident that I would pass it. However, when I saw the DMV officer, I was very nervous. While I drove beside him, my mind went blank! I couldn’t see any signs on the road. I drove smoothly and followed his directions. Suddenly, he said that we had to go back to the DMV right away in an angry tone. I didn’t understand what mistake I had made. I realized what I had done when I took the paper he wrote. I entered one-way street going the wrong direction!! He said that there might be a serious accident if another car was coming. As you can expect, I failed. I should have been more cautious.

Now, I have a driver’s license. I passed the test the second time. After the failed road test, I always see all signs on the road carefully. Additionally, I have never entered a one-way street going the wrong direction.

Student: Youngji
Tutors: Virginia Stevens, Eleanor Weseloh, Charlotte Luzzi
Country: Korea
Site: Keefe Community Center, Hamden
How My Life Has Changed

Since I have started working with my Tutor, Pam, I have felt more confident and less anxious, when reading out loud from the books we use. Also, I am learning to appreciate the newspaper and I am more interested in current events than I used to be.

My Tutor, Pam, has taught me a lot of reading comprehension skills. I have increased my skills of inferring when reading. I use a lot of my background knowledge and I can picture in my head what it is I am reading.

If I am reading something unfamiliar, I can look it up on the computer. In addition, I started a vocabulary journal. I still need to hone my skills with comprehending street directions and to become a more independent reader, figuring out the main idea who the main characters are and to better understand the flow of the story or the author’s purpose. I am hoping to become more independent when reading.

Lastly, taking these classes taught me that I can learn to become a better reader with the help of my Tutor and some practice of these skills on my own.

Student: Susan
Country: USA
Tutor: Pamela Conrad
Site: Ansonia Library, Ansonia
Confidence

All my life I never had any confidence in myself. I do not know why. I always thought I was not smart enough. I always wonder what happened to me. I have three siblings and they all have good careers. My youngest brother was an engineer in the telephone company. My oldest brother was a policeman. My little sister has a master’s degree.

The last time I was in school was in 1962. I had one more year to go before I would get my diploma. With some problems at home, I left school and got a job. I worked for thirteen years at Winchester, one year and a half at Pratt & Whitney and at Sikorsky Aircraft for thirty-four years with raising a family I never had the time to finish school. So when I retired in 2011, I decided to return to school. I did not want my brain to turn to mush. My weakness is learning my times tables. I am trying to remember so hard because I never had to learn them. I get so discouraged when I forget them.

With Gene Kirsten as my math teacher and Lou as my GED teacher and Janie Homes as my reading teacher, my confidence is slowly coming back.

Student: Doris
Country: USA
Tutors: Gene Kirsten, Janie Holmes
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven

Accomplishments

I still have a very hard time to read and write English. When I came here I didn’t know English but now I speak English with my children.

Student: Hawaye
Country: Sudan
Tutors: David Cowell, Elizabeth Greenspan
Site: Mitchell Library, New Haven
Do You Know “YOKAI”?

I experienced the real Halloween for the first time in the U.S.
The teacher asked us “What comes to your mind when you hear Halloween?”
That reminded me of ghost, vampire, witch, fairy, and so on. What kind of monsters are there in Japan? What kind of differences are there between western and eastern? Suddenly I thought such that things. That was the reason that I write this essay.

There are monsters called “YOKAI” in Japan but actually they are different from monsters. “YOKAI” are creatures from Japanese folklore. For examples, there are Kappa (river child), Karakasa (Umbrella boy), Hitotsume-Kozo (One-eyed-boy), Oni (God of disaster), and so on.

I especially explain about Karakasa. He came to life after his owner threw him away and really mistreated him. So now he goes hopping on one foot scaring people. He is basically a messenger to tell the Japanese people “Treat your belongings with care!!”

YOKAI has long been told in Japan that when one encounters a strange or peculiar phenomenon he/she suspects that Yokai must be manipulating this. It is said that YOKAI not only punishes people for their laziness and selfishness but also teaches them to take good care of things and to respect nature and environment. Many Japanese have long been familiar with Yokai.

There is fairy that is handed down in an American society. I think fairy is so similar to YOKAI. And also I learned that there is the word of “the gremlin effect” in the U.S. *the gremlin effect: The machine or computers perform abnormal for some reason.

Gremlin is a fairy who plays pranks to a machine, and is a distant relative of gnomes and goblins. In the past, they gave people hints to invent something and gave craftsman advices to create something. But human didn’t respect and appreciate for them. Therefore, they disliked human and started to play pranks.

We can find the more interesting things about the culture and history of each contrys by identifying similarities and differences between the many kind of monsters and Japanese YOKAI. I thought about something like that through Halloween.

Student: Fumika
Country: Japan
Tutors: Norma Barash, Ed Goldstone
Site: Gateway Community College, New Haven
Different Customs of Special Festivals

My name is Li Ying and I am from the beautiful city of Guangzhou, China. I have been living in the United States for five years. I went to Literacy Volunteers to learn daily life English. I was very happy that I was learning English and I met many students from different countries.

We were studying different festivals in our different countries. In the United States, Christmas and New Year are big holidays. Christmas is the day when Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ the Savior. People send each other Christmas cards and families have dinner together at home to celebrate Christmas. Many roast a turkey or a goose. People also gather in churches, streets or squares to sing Christmas songs. They pray for blessings, and they welcome Christmas. New Year’s Eve is very lively. There is an interesting custom: people make a promise for the New Year. They call it a “New Year’s Resolution.” For example: “I must quit smoking,” or “I want to treat our neighbors well” and so on.

In China, the people celebrate the Chinese New Year, or the “Spring Festival.” We usually celebrate the New Year with firecrackers and a sumptuous family feast at home or at a restaurant. Another New Year’s custom is that people decorate their front doors with red Spring Festival Couplets – two lines of poetry to wish our family and friends a prosperous New Year. People also put on their windows red paper cutouts of animals, flowers etc. They stand for luck and happiness in the coming year. The younger people will visit older people to celebrate the New Year, and the adults will give red envelopes to the children. Inside the envelopes, there is money that symbolizes good luck. I really enjoy special festivals.

I am very grateful to the teachers who teach me English and talk to us about our cultures. I like learning English with my classmates and making progress. I am thankful for meeting new friends and good teachers. My life is no longer lonely. I wish everyone happiness, I hope that all your wishes come true, and that everything goes well for you in the United States.

Student: Li Ying
Country: China
Tutors: Charlotte Luzzi, Virginia Stevens, Eleanor Weseloh
Site: Keefe Community Center, Hamden
I love my city

My city is Ambato and it’s in Ecuador country. It is sometimes called Land of the Flowers and Fruits. Ambato is located in the central valley of Ecuador. We also enjoy spring weather all year.

This city is very commercial. Many people work in the land. They cultivate many kinds of flowers, fruits, vegetables, nuts. They export beautiful flowers all over the world.

A special part of city is Baños that is popular with tourists because of the volcano, river and hot springs. Many beautiful waterfalls, hiking trails and places to kayak and you can ride horses in the city. It is a place that you should visit.

Student: Monica  
Country: Ecuador  
Tutor: Bud Sielaff  
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

A Chinese Custom

In China, there is a custom of making dumplings during the Spring Festival. On this day, families get together, and my mother takes out the prepared minced meat and dumpling skins. Then, she calls everyone to make dumplings, and those who know how to make them will come. Mother next takes out a clean coin, usually one that is worth about a dollar, and puts it in one of the dumplings. Everyone will be very attentive at dinner. The person who eats the dumpling with the coin will be very lucky next year. If you attend the Spring Festival, you can all be looking forward to getting this coin for luck!

Student: Sun  
Country: China  
Tutors: Robert Glen, Donald Desmond  
Site: La Casa, New Haven
Jamaica and the U.S.

I went to Jamaica on March 8 to visit my friends and family. I took two big suitcases and one carry-on. Each one cost $35 or $40 to take on Jet Blue. I reached Jamaica and started to have a good time. Then I started to give away things. I do this every time I go back to Jamaica because it’s my family and I want to contribute in each and every way I can. Then I realized I gave away everything and had to borrow money from my mother. (In past years I have given away my watches and even two out of three suitcases, because I can’t afford to pay for them on the plane.) My mother is my queen. She is 84 years old and in good health. She still does the washing and the cooking for herself, and goes outside and does the bushing [cutting the grass with a machete].

Things are very expensive in Jamaica. Here is the way the system is set up. In Waterford, in the parish of St. Catherine, they built housing schemes, low income buildings. Matalon was a contractor back in the day who used to build prefab houses with two bedrooms on a slab so you can expand upward or sideward. A lot of poor people fell for it, never knew what was coming after Waterford and surrounding areas became well developed and overpopulated. The government built a highway and put tolls there like Governor Lamont wants to do in Connecticut, only worse. In Jamaica it costs $200 one way to get from Waterford into Kingston, and another $200 to get home. So that’s $400 a day to use the highways, so people who can’t afford the tolls take the back roads and sit in traffic for hours. They never put the tolls uptown where the rich people live, only where the poor are.

America always talks about the rich, the one percent. But it’s more than just the one percent. You have the rich, the mega class, the upper class, the upper middle class that live in Cheshire, the middle class in Wallingford and Meriden, the poor and the poorest who live in section 8 housing and live from paycheck to paycheck. Every country lives on the backs of poor people, because poor people are the majority. They pay more taxes because they are more.

The politicians tell the people what they want to hear to get the votes. It’s not politics, it’s politricks.

Student: Sam
Country: Jamaica
Tutor: Cheryl Weston
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden
Winter Scene
Temperature goes down
Pond water freezes to one piece
Skating time

Beauty
What makes the rainbow?
The sun, the rain, the angle
and eyes to find beauty

Music
I sit at rehearsal
with full spirit and energy
where is my French horn?

Student: Linda L
Country: China
Tutors: Jane Bouvier, Eleanor Weseloh, Charlotte Luzzi, Virginia Stevens
Site: Keefe Community Center, Hamden
What Literacy Is to Me...

Writing to me is freedom, independence, and choice
Writing to me is Liberty, Right, and Permission
Writing to me is friendship, bond, relationship, and rapport
Writing to me is love of family, feeling, passion, and devotion
Writing to me is partnership, company, and business

Reading to me is information, material, news report, and communication
Reading to me is life, soul, and sparkle
Reading to me is power, influence, muscle, and dominance
Reading to me is control, device, skillfulness, and restrict
Reading to me is everywhere, universally, and ubiquitously
Reading to me is all times necessary, essential, required, crucial, and mandatory

Student: Michael
Country: USA
Tutor: Celeste Malia
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

Autumn Leaves
See through the window
Colorful autumn leaves
They cheer my new life!

Student: Rumi
Country: Japan
Tutors: Jane Bouvier, Eleanor Weseloh, Charlotte Luzzi, Virginia Stevens
Site: Keefe Community Center, Hamden
What is Behind the Walls?

Around the world and around the continents, and between the islands and across the oceans and beyond the seas, in all the countries and in the cities, and the villages,

What is behind the walls?
I see an old woman by a sewing machine in a small town in China working all day to get $20.
I see an Indian baby in a wealthy family. All take care of him in a beautiful house and in a gorgeous room.
I see an old couple living in Europe, keeping their old-style, traditional life.
I see a group of Muslims praying in the mosque and having peace, love, and faith in their heart in the holy mosque in Mecca.
I see a family watching a comedy movie on Sunday evening in a warm apartment in Cairo.
I see a group of workers in the early morning in the farm market in Mexico. They are cleaning the vegetables and the fruits.
I see a soccer team coming out from the building, riding the bus in Barcelona.
I see a light in a dark house. A student is studying hard for a test tomorrow in South Africa.
I see a mom nursing her child in Yemen.
I see twenty children in a class in Istanbul, listening to a story. It is so clear they are learning and having fun.
I see a church in New York City full of Christians celebrating Christmas Eve.
I see a lonely lady having dinner on a cold night in her kitchen in Paris.
I see children in a hospital in Syria. All their faces show tears. I hear the sound of pain.
I see young people having coffee in a nice cafe in Israel.
I see a group of women baking fresh bread in a small town in Palestine.
I see a family celebrating the wedding night of their oldest daughter in Morocco. She is wearing a white dress and has a kind smile. There are some tears in her eyes.

These are the pictures I see behind the walls.

Now, what do you see behind them?

Student: Sarah
Country: Sudan
Tutors: Roy Ogren, Susan Smith, Naomi Shiloh
Site: Gateway Community College, New Haven
My Dream of America

I was born in Togo, West Africa on June 6, 1980 and grew up there. I have four sisters and two brothers. The school I went to was named Kitidjan. Togo is a French colony and everyone speaks French. All my studies were in French. I was 17 years old when I met my husband, Ouro. I knew his mom and she wanted her son to marry me. She went to my father and asked for permission for her son to marry me. My father agreed to have us meet to see if we liked each other. After meeting and liking each other, we were married two months later.

My husband and I wanted to go to live in America to have a better life. My husband applied and got a visa, and he lived in Connecticut for one year before I could come here. I arrived in Connecticut in 2003 and our first son was born in 2004. My husband’s father was very excited to have his first grandchild born, but he died one month later in Africa and never saw his grandson. My second son was born in 2007 and my daughter in 2011. When I first came here I didn’t know English, so I watched kid’s cartoons on TV. Sometimes my brother came to visit me, he spoke English. We practiced speaking together. I studied for my driver’s license and passed.

My husband bought a car and then I was able to go to school and learn English. I also started taking classes to get my citizenship. It took me a few months to learn about the United States government. I got my citizenship 5 years after I arrived in the United States.

Now I know dreams are possible. First a person must have a dream, and then they must follow a road to get there. Sometimes it is hard to stay on the road. A person must check their direction and make sure the road is leading them in the right direction to their dream. It is good for everyone to take or make an opportunity for education. Being educated gives a person power so they can accomplish their dreams. My husband and I have both worked hard, saved our money, and we now own a lovely Habitat for Humanity home, which all of us help build.

Student: Hari
Country: Togo
Tutor: Enid Sherry
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven
My First Year in this Country

My name is Betty Lopez. I live with my family. I have one daughter. My husband works in construction, my daughter goes to school and I stay home. I arrived in this country a year ago. To arrive in this country and to start again was hard for me, especially because the language is very hard for me to learn. I hope to learn English soon and be able to get ahead in this wonderful country full of opportunities, find a good job and give my daughter a better life.

Student: Betty
Country: Ecuador
Tutor: Keith French
Location: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

Achieving My Goals

My name is Joseph McKalla. My story is about how to achieve my goals in life. I have been a student of the Literacy Volunteers class for two years. My goal is to be a good reader and to get my GED. How I plan to achieve these goals is to focus on one thing at a time.

Student: Joseph
Country: Jamaica
Tutor: Gina Ferreri
Site: Plumb Library, Shelton
**My Goals**

I joined Literacy Volunteers to learn how to read, write, and better myself. I sometimes have people laugh at me or make fun because I can’t read well. Because of this, my self-esteem is affected. I feel empty inside because I don’t have the education. So, I am trying to better myself. I want to be bold, to speak up, and be more confident when I have to read or sign a document.

Since I started with Vanessa, I see myself improving on my reading, my vocabulary, and my speech (English). I feel that if I continue, I can be where I want to be. My long term goal is to become a nurse or start my own business. They say that education is the key to life so I am trying to make myself better for my future. I also feel that working on my reading and writing will help me get a better job.

**Student:** Grace  
**Country:** USA  
**Tutor:** C. Vanessa Clarke  
**Site:** West Haven Library

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**Learning English**

My Dream is to learn English so I can go to a cooking class. I would like to find a job at a small restaurant and then run my own Persian restaurant business.

**Student:** Miryam  
**Country:** Iran  
**Tutors:** Robert Glen, Donald Desmond  
**Site:** La Casa, New Haven
My Dreams for the Future

Right now I want to write better by increasing words and getting confidence to get my thoughts on paper. I am a part of the men’s ministry at my church. I am coaching the young men’s basketball team. In blessing them, I receive blessings. I tried getting my GED about a year ago. Limited vocabulary prevented me from understanding the work. In a story I read in a class called “It’s Never Too Late,” I related to the struggle of John Corcoran. He overcame obstacles and at age 48, he started a foundation to teach others with learning difficulties. In the future, I do not want to let my problems distract me from my goals – to be a better man and get my GED.

Student: Stephen W. Jones, Sr.
Country: USA
Tutors: Rosemary Benivegna, Janice Crann
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven
**My Dreams for the Future**

My plans for the future are to learn different skills like listening and speaking English. I need to save money to go to school and get my driver’s license. Right now I am studying to take the written test for my license. Then I want to study a career like nursing or administration.

After that with my husband I want to go traveling to different countries like Spain, Costa Rica, and Ecuador to visit family and friends. I think I will stay motivated every day to continue with my plans and reach my dreams.

**Student:** Johanna  
**Country:** Ecuador  
**Tutors:** Norma Barash, Ed Goldstone  
**Site:** Gateway Community College, New Haven

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**My Plan for the Future**

I want to continue my career that I have in my country. In my country of Ecuador I was a dentist. Now is my opportunity to learn English. I want to finish all the classes. I want to sign up for my next level of education for my future. When my English is ready I plan to study to become a dental hygienist.

**Student:** Mariuxi  
**Country:** Ecuador  
**Tutors:** Norma Barash, Ed Goldstone, Desh Sharma, Nancy Ferraro  
**Site:** Gateway Community College, New Haven
Knowledge Gained

My Experiences at La Casa
My experiences at La Casa (“the home”) have been very pleasant. There are nice people from many countries in the classes there. In my English class, I have learned a lot about their customs, culture, and languages. Learning English is very difficult, but I do not give up because nothing is easy in this life. Thank you very much to Literacy Volunteers.

Student: Antonio
Country: Mexico
Tutors: Robert Glen, Donald Desmond
Site: La Casa, New Haven

Tips to Have While Learning English
Struggle is a common word in our short lifetime. We all know what it’s like to struggle in one way or another. If you are learning a new language, then I can say, speaking from experience that the struggle is real. Nevertheless, I have come to find help by means of comic books, TV shows, and music. What has been and still is a great help for me is music. I find myself learning and memorizing songs. That way I can become familiar with certain words and their pronunciations. Yes, music is one of the best ways to create a bond with your new language that you are learning. Another thing that you can do, like me, is go out in the community and see if you can get a tutor. They are great. They will teach you the dos and don’ts as well as the proper way to formulate phrases.

Student: Daphna
Country: Haiti
Tutors: Mary Williams, Andre Wallace
Location: Plumb Library, Shelton
Our Experience Moving to the United States

There are many doubts when you decide to move to another country. It’s not easy to make a tough decision like that one. The first time we visited my daughter and her husband I didn’t imagine that we would move to this city. I enjoyed our days visiting the Yale campus and the main historic places in town.

We didn’t meet any other persons than her husband. We had a good time. I was very glad to see my daughter was happy with her marriage and her job. When we got back to our beautiful city Queretaro with its beautiful weather, I told my wife we were very lucky to live around friends and family in a sunny and peaceful city. One day my wife and I started to talk about moving to New Haven. We knew it wouldn’t be easy to take such a hard decision, so we decided to listen to our son and daughter. First of all, we needed to learn about different issues such as legal documents complete, moving matters, places to live, health insurance and economic issues among others. We started to do all the paper work in order to obtain our green cards. The procedure to fill the forms was complex. However, when you have all the documents in order, it’s easy to complete the procedure. Sometimes we needed to wait for weeks to receive some instructions to proceed. We had to be patient.

When we came to New Haven we visited different areas to live close to our daughter and son-in-law. We wanted to live close to them to help with the new baby. A realtor presented us with many options in New Haven of homes to rent or buy. Besides, I read a little bit about utilities and taxes to understand their impact on our personal finances. Meanwhile we were organizing our home in Queretaro to move to New Haven. We needed to decide what things we should bring with us to continue our day-to-day life in this new city. Another important issue was our health. We had interviews with insurance salesmen of different companies. It’s
very complicated and expensive to buy health insurance, however, we bought it. We wanted to feel safe. Later on we had to learn about the medical care system.

There were other important affairs to consider in our adaptation to the new life, such as: language, food, weather, and community, among others. We needed to have a proactive and positive attitude. We like to be happy. Finally, we decided on August 2015 to move to the United States. After more than three years living in New Haven I can say that we have enjoyed it for many reasons. We have libraries, museums, cinemas, community groups, diversity of religions, weather and food. One factor which I consider crucial to our happy stay is that we have met many positive and incredible persons who invite us to participate in diverse activities.

My wife and I have adapted our way of life. We try to participate in different community groups, in the church, in the library, etc. However, the most significant fact to living here is my family. Now we enjoy our kids and grandsons every day. We are very happy to have taken this important and crucial decision in our lives.

Student: Roberto
Country: Mexico
Tutors: Elizabeth Greenspan, David Cowell
Site: Mitchell Library, New Haven
Learning

There are many ways people learn to read.

First, visual. Visual learners sit in a classroom and watch a slide, learn to travel to school, work, home and other destinations. Some travel one time and can remember the route. Some can take you back to the location without any problem and can tell you the places they pass to get there. That is someone that has a photographic memory.

Second, braille. Braille learning style is a person that is blind and is assisted by a guide dog and is taught braille that is placed on elevators or on crosswalk light poles. There are other devices that help them to navigate daily life and activity.

Third, deaf community. Deaf people use all kinds of devices to help. In the movie industry they have subtitles that are placed on the bottom of the screen for the deaf to participate in the visual world, TV and meetings. They also use sign language.

Fourth, hands-on learning. A hands-on learner is one that learns through hands-on daily life. Agriculture, pottery, food service, home economics, budgeting, and the list goes on.

Fifth, dyslexia. A person with dyslexia reads things backwards. Some of the people with dyslexia are brilliant.

Sixth, special education. There are also special education students, some can read and some can’t. There are some that need twenty-four hour service. The parents of some special ed students are special ed themselves so family services are needed.

I, myself, came to Literacy Volunteers because, although I could read, I couldn’t understand very well. Outreach to local universities or private organizations might get a grant for intensive testing to identify different learning styles of some of our students.

Student: Sonia
Country: Jamaica
Tutor: Miriam Putterman
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven
My Advice
What would you like to tell others who are struggling with literacy?

It was depressing to sit and read because I couldn’t read well. I didn’t have the attention span to sit and read. I said to myself, “I can’t finish a book.” Literacy tutoring has helped me by encouraging me to read more outside my workbook, like the newspaper and magazines. Don’t let the workbook be the only thing you read. I read at home and in bed and that helps put me to sleep!

Later in life, I find that reading is a form of communication, and if you don’t have that, you can get lost in this big old world. You have to know how to read and read well. People will take advantage of you if you cannot read. If you know how to read, other forms of communication come into place, like writing and spelling. If you cannot read, then you cannot spell and if you can’t spell, you can’t put your thoughts on paper and that will hold you back from advancing. If you can’t put your thoughts on paper, that can depress you so you just go on from day to day, watching TV and not learning anything new, but if you have any sense, you will get back to reading.

Look up a word if you don’t know it and get the meaning. Use the dictionary as if it is your Bible. Also try to use the words that are around to get the meaning from them. This is using the context of words to get the meaning. By reading, new words keep popping into my head. Every week I look up words and find new ones and I like the way they sound, like “astute,” or “proprietor,” or “philanthropist,” or “unequivocal”!

Since taking classes with Literacy Volunteers, reading has opened my mind to a lot of things, such as finding out what’s happening in the world. The tutor is helping me read better and that is opening my mind. I’ve learned to read a lot more than I did a year ago. I’ve learned to read faster. Keep reading and reading and things will open up for you mentally. Ask questions and visit the library because there is a lot of information there. Read about something that you enjoy doing like sports or current events.

Never get away from reading because somewhere down the line, you must get back to reading or else you will be miserable. It doesn’t matter how old you are, you can still learn to read. Reading can be fun. Never give up on reading.

Student: Charles
Country: USA
Tutor: Nina Ruckes
Site: West Haven Library, West Haven
Dear Helmut,

I know how upset you get with me when I turn the air conditioner on in the car or at home because it adds to air pollution. Living in CT, where we have hot and humid weather, I find it necessary to do so. Older people especially would suffer greatly.

You still eat a lot of beef. To feed cattle often means trees are cut down to make fields for grazing. Cattle produce emission of methane which is also harmful for the environment.

Germany has done a great deal to save the environment. Windmills and solar panels are all over the country. On the other hand, major car manufacturers have manipulated the devices that measure the emission outlet.

There is still much to do for our planet. As you know the earth has warmed 1 degree Celsius since 1880 causing corral reefs to die, ice to melt and oceans to rise.

You and I can take small steps as insulate the house, turn the lights off, drive less. Using public transportation helps too. I’m thinking about buying a car that is powered by electricity.

Let us take baby steps toward saving our planet.

Barbara
A Letter to A

Dear A,

Hi, I hope you have been enjoying life in the U.S. I remember that you were looking forward to coming here when I met you in Korea last summer. You said it would be exciting to have all kinds of meat at relatively inexpensive prices in America, compared to Korea. Of course, I understand what you meant. It was also so surprising to me seeing such affordably priced meats here, particularly beef, when I went to Costco for the first time. Beef is fairly costly in our country and generally we are not able to get it as much as we want. However, when I heard the news that you are obsessed with having beef everyday, I decided to tell you the reality about climate change.

You might be uncomfortable to listen to this, because you already knew it.

Despite this, the reason I emphasize the importance of protecting our environment is for your next generation, including your kids. As you have heard, global warming is getting worse and meat production is a main culprit. Cattle production needs a huge amount of land, causing deforestation, and fertilizer to grow food for cows. Those cows emit huge amounts of methane gas, and it leads to the greenhouse effect. Please think twice. Although you feel happy at the moment of eating beef thinking like, “Oh, I feel so wealthy,” but that is just momentary pleasure. I am sure you really want your children to lead lives safely in the future without environmental insecurity such as natural disaster. So, here are some of my suggestions.

First, have more seafood or white meat than red meat. I know chicken is the soul food for many Koreans, including me, so it is difficult to quit chicken completely. We can start from this stage.

Second, eat meat-free days each week.

If you can start from 2 days a week, it would be more effective, but do not overrate yourself. Set a realizable plan.

Thank you for your time and looking forward to sharing our amazing change of life soon.

Best,

Younsoo

Student: Younsoo
Country: South Korea
Tutors: Jerry Delamater, Desh Sharma
Site: Yale Health Center, New Haven
My Job: Pros and Cons

There are a lot of pros and cons to being a waitress. The pros are fast cash and that it’s fast paced. The cons are that it’s a dead end job and you have to work with people…some may enjoy that aspect however I look at it as a con.

In a restaurant being good at your job means you have to be quick on your feet but also thinking ten steps ahead and keeping everything organized in your head. I enjoy this. I can be constantly going. Multitasking gives you a rush knowing one wrong move can throw off the entire night. We use terms like I can barely keep my head above water and I’m drowning once something throws you off that you can’t recover from that’s drowning once you keep everything straight and walk away with a hand full of cash you feel like a champion.

However, the cons are that it’s a dead end job there are no benefits so the cash you walk away with is all you get. Also when working with people it’s like working with ticking time bombs. Never knowing who’s going to go off - customers and coworkers alike. Serving is also a very social job so everyone pries into each other business.

I hope to have a job that is task oriented. A job that requires employees to be 100% focused on the job you’re doing but also has a risk factor or pressure so I can get that rush and sense of pride. Something that keeps me on my toes. An exciting job where everyone is focused on the work.

Student: Anonymous
Country: USA
Tutor: Nancy Votto
Site: 14 West Main St. Meriden.
A New Life

My name is Ching Mei Peng. I am from a small country, Taiwan. My husband passed away in January, 1994, so my life state has been difficult. Later I arrived in the United States with my son's family. He has two children and life was very hard. One time I went to see a friend in her house. There I met a very kind person. His name was Bob. I asked Bob to teach me the English language. That Spring I went to New Haven Adult School to study English. Then I had a new life.

Student: Ching Mei Peng  
Country: Taiwan  
Tutors: Robert Glen, Donald Desmond  
Site: La Casa, New Haven

The Winter Time

I came to New Haven in January of this year. It was wintertime here. It was cold outside, but I like the snow days. Everything becomes white. It looks like the world of fairy tales, which is quiet and peaceful.

My neighbor has two children who are twins. They are very cute. We had a snowball fight, and then we built a snowman. Actually, we built the snowman as a girl. She wore a red scarf and a yellow hat. Her nose was made from a carrot, and her mouth was made out of leaves. We looked at her and felt so happy.

We like winter, but we look forward to Spring.

Student: Kai  
Country: China  
Tutors: Robert Glen, Donald Desmond  
Site: La Casa, New Haven
My First Terrible Cold Experience Day in New Haven

My husband and I come from India. We have been in New Haven for almost seven months. Since the beginning of winter everyone has been asking. “How do you feel in the cold weather?”

Until this (Jan-21-2019) day, we really never felt too cold, but that day we felt too cold. And we had never experienced a power cut in our house. Suddenly, the power was off everything, like the stove, oven, and heat too. We felt very cold and we were also unable to make tea. My husband called UI and asked about the power. They said the power will be on between 2 and 3 pm. To escape from the cold we decided to go to my husband’s lab. Anyway, he had worked there for two hours. We started walking to the lab. My neighbor was also going the same way, so he asked us, “Do you want ride?” We said “Yes”. When we tried to open the rear door of his car, it wouldn’t open because it was totally frozen. We tried hard. But we failed to unlock the door.

So we decided to walk. While walking we saw many trees were covered with ice. They looked beautiful. We were shivering. After my husband finished his work, we returned home. Then we checked the power; it was on. So we prepared some food and ate. We were still feeling very cold, so we checked the heat. We found that the heat was not working, so we called the landlord and told him about the heat. He said, “I’m sending a person to fix the heat.” Meanwhile we were feeling so cold. We sat on the couch fully covered with blankets but we still felt very cold. Finally, a person came and fixed the heat and it worked fine. We felt so happy. But after some time it went off again. So we called the landlord again around 9.30 pm. He said, “I am sending two portable room heaters that you can use. We will fix the heat in the morning”. So we got heaters and they worked well.

That was my most memorable cold day in New Haven.

The next morning a person came and repaired the heat.

Student: Krishnaveni
Country: India
Tutor: Stephanie FitzGerald
Site: Literacy Resource Center, 5 Science Park, New Haven
What I Like

I like going out with my daughters and my husband. One daughter is 6 years old, one daughter is 3 years old.
I like going to the mall with my family and going out for our anniversary with my husband. I also like going to the movies. My favorite movie is The Fast and the Furious.

Student: Ellen
Country: Ireland
Tutor: Liz Ianniello
Site: Derby Library, Derby

Yale University

In just a few minutes and we are there. Yale and all its beauty is a place where I did not dream to go. It is surprising that the tranquility prevails around, considering that we are practically in the center of the city. Each building is fascinating.

I want to remember everything in the smallest detail, like you will when you get to another city. If you do not pay attention to the rare cars on the street, you can think you are in olden times.

The village university was founded more than 300 years ago, however many buildings were built relatively recently. The architect who worked on the design of the buildings did a great job in order to age and make the appearance of the buildings nothing more new than its predecessors.

In front of the Sterling Memorial Library stands a sculpture dedicated to women who graduated Yale University designed by Maya Lin. The sculpture is called “The Women’s Table”. By this she drew attention to the fact that women until 1969 had no opportunity to study at Yale.

I enjoyed my tour very much.

Student: Ekaterina
Country: Russia
Tutor: Brian and Laurie Gray
Site: Wallingford Public Library, Wallingford
Winter

My first experience of something I never had seen before in my life was winter and snow. I was born in a tropical country, The Democratic Republic of Congo, where we have two seasons: rainy and sunny. Both are warm weather.

It was in a quiet evening in December, 2004 in the USA. While I was taking my nap, suddenly my daughter woke me and slowly she brought me to the window and opened the curtains. Oh my God! It was a big surprise for me and I felt like I was dreaming. It was very nice and beautiful and amazing, seeing the snow falling and the white drifts of snow down on the ground. Everything outside was covered by a white blanket: the roads, the cars, the parking lot, the roofs of the houses, the gardens, the hills and valleys, and it was difficult to see the paths. The city was calm and had changed its appearance. The atmosphere changed and the purified air gave peace to my mind. Only the sound of the snow removers was heard all night.

Already, early in the morning, kids enjoyed playing in the snow, making snow men and snow balls, and people were struggling to remove the snow in their paths and on the cars. The lovers of winter sports were very pleased with the snow, for skiing, sledding, skating, tobogganing and cross-country skiing.

Winter was the coldest and harshest moment I ever experienced in my life. Going outside was very difficult and all my activities were paralyzed.

In winter, natural life changes and seems so dead: trees look like ghosts by losing all their leaves so we can see all of the houses behind them. There is no more green grass, no flowers, no bird songs. All the city is calm! Life becomes complicated; the accumulation of snow and slippery roads causes many deadly accidents, public transportation and the bus stop become inaccessible and many people miss their jobs and appointments. Bills for electricity and gas and oil go up, the homeless lose their places and must look for new shelter. Life becomes very stressed! With bad driving, people suffer a lot. Flu and cold are spread one person to another. Sometimes schools are
closed or delayed and kids stay home with their parents. Many outside activities are closed: such as parks, sports fields, and barbecue parties. Walking paths, lakes and rivers are frozen and impractical.

However, even after all this, life keeps going on with all activities inside, since all the rooms are heated as well as the cars and houses. Winter is for me, a discovery and a good experience in my life. It taught me never to give up and to keep going so nothing can prevent me from doing what I have to do. Flu and cold are spread one person to another. Sometimes schools are closed or delayed and kids stay home with their parents. Many outside activities are closed: such as parks, sports fields, and barbecue parties. Walking paths, lakes and rivers are frozen and impractical.

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Student: Kusima
Country: Democratic Republic of Congo
Tutor: Bob Martin
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

My Brother Alex

My brother Alex works in the truck. He delivers steel to companies in different states. Some of the states he delivers to are: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Sometimes his truck breaks down and he has to work late.

I live in the house with Alex and two dogs. The two dog’s names are Charlie and Nicky. I like to play with them. Alex has three children named Leo, Natasha, and Daniella. Leo lives in the house with us. Natasha lives in Florida. Daniella lives in Las Vegas. Alex, Leo, and I go to Las Vegas to visit Daniella.

Student: Martha
Country: USA
Tutor: Dwayne Paul
Site: Ansonia Library, Ansonia
The 1999 special olympics world summer games

I went to Raleigh, North Carolina to play in the Summer Games. Randy and Cissy Burns were like parents to me. When I was 14 years old they took me under their wing and treated me like a daughter. Mrs. Burns spoke to my Mom about taking me to Raleigh. Mrs. Burns told my Mom that she will take care of me and make sure I eat and get enough sleep. I love Randy and Cissy.

I played on the Volleyball Team.
I played on the Basketball Team.
I played on the Bowling Team.
I played on the Gymnastics Team.
I was on the Swimming Team.
I won medals and badges. I came in 1st Place in Basketball and won a Gold Medal. I also got a Silver Medal for Volleyball and Gymnastics.
I met Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, and Stevie Wonder at the Stadium. They said hello to me and shook my hand.
I had so much fun I did not want to go back home.
My friends and I had our picture taken together.

Student: Vanessa
Country: USA
Tutor: Mary Alice O’Brien
Site: Derby Library, Derby

My Mother Was My Mother and My Father at the Same Time

When I was born in 1987, my Mom was very happy. When I was eight years old, she taught me how to drive a bicycle. She taught me how to dance. During childhood and my young life, my mother taught me to always respect and be kind to people and especially to myself. I always say, Thank you, God, for everything. She was a person that I will always admire.

Student: Melida
Country: Ecuador
Tutor: Keith French
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden
My Grandfather

I only knew one of my grandparents. His name was Antonio Diaz. He was my mother’s dad. My grandparents from my mother’s side were born in the Canary Islands. They had four children (my mother and three sons). Two of them were born in the Canary Islands and the other two were born in Cuba.

My grandfather had a strong character and he did not like to repeat what he told us. He was a very educated person. He always wore a long-sleeved shirt. He was very handsome and he walked very straight. I was his favorite granddaughter. He called me, “My little girl.” I loved my grandfather a lot. I love him and I will love him while I have life. He was always very special to me.

Student: Maria
Country: Cuba
Tutor: Keith French
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

My Home Town

In the city that I grew up in, we had a farm. Everything from pigs to lambs. We had someone who would take care of all the animals. But on vacations, I would help with the animals. We also had some workers would plant vegetables. We didn’t have to buy any groceries since we grew it all and raised the farm animals. I would ride horses all the time. It was a form of transportation.

I would also play soccer. I was the only girl in a field full of boys. I eventually got married and had six kids. I came to the U.S.A. when I was 46 years old. My biggest surprise when I came here was snow since I never had seen snow before. It was extremely cold, but I loved the snow.

Student: Julia
Country: Peru
Tutors: Frank Corrigan, Pat Donnelly, Enid Sherry
Site: Gateway Community College, New Haven
My Life in America

I am from Russia. I was born in Moscow, graduated from high school and university, and then, for a long time, I worked at a research institute. I had a very interesting job and a good apartment. That is why my life in Russia was very successful. But twenty years ago, my oldest daughter moved to the USA and was married. After this two children were born and I became a grandfather. My daughter worked many hours and needed help caring for her children. My wife and I thought for a long time and decided to move to the USA to help our daughter. Now I live in the USA, in Hamden, together with my family.

When I lived in Russia, I read many books about America. I knew that this country had a rich history, and that America was the first country to put a person on the moon. Now American and Russian people work together on the International Space Station. This is very important and interesting.

When I arrived here, I saw that American people were very friendly. Very often I hear, “You are welcome”. It is very useful, especially when you don’t know the English language or how to begin a new life. First of all I decided to buy a car and get a driver’s license. These problems I solved very fast. I got a license and bought a used car. The second, more difficult problem is learning the English language. To solve this problem I began to attend the Literacy Volunteers English courses at the Keefe Community Center in Hamden. I try to study very hard, but this process is going very slowly. I don’t have any English-speaking friends. In my family, at home we speak in Russian. For this reason I don’t have practice speaking English.

Student: Oleg
Country: Russia
Tutors: Charlotte, Virginia Stevens, Eleanor Weseloh
Site: Keefe Community Center, Hamden
Limits of the Human Body

The Human body, including our brain, has much more potential than we know. Also our brain has more potential than what we currently use in our everyday life.

Clairvoyance – the supernatural power of seeing objects or actions removed in space or time. A person said to have the ability of clairvoyance is referred to as a clairvoyant (“one who sees clearly”). A clairvoyant usually carries several different types of abilities, including: extrasensory perception, preparation visual information. People who have clairvoyant ability have said that they had a “third eye”.

I personally know one person who has clairvoyance. This is a friend of our family and Godfather of my daughter. He is a medical worker and while he worked as a doctor in the Afghan War, he was seriously ill. When the doctors thought he would die, he felt strange abilities. A list of predictions or Alexandr’s help may be very long. But I want to tell one story about my daughter and Alexandr’s abilities. When I was pregnant with my first daughter, after the first ultrasound, all doctors said that my baby had high risk for Down Syndrome. I very much wanted to have that baby girl and believe that was the doctor’s mistake. I went to Alexandr and explained my problem to him. He predicted some episodes from the future of my daughter and he said that my daughter would be healthy. I believed him because he had predicted other events in my life that came true. Because he saved the life of my healthy daughter, her name is Anastasia, and Alexandr became her Godfather. The doctors recommended doing an abortion; however Alexandr formally saved her life. Now she is a student in sixth grade, and is 11 years old. She is a smart (has good grades in school), a beautiful girl and helper at home for me.

I thank God that I know people who have unusual abilities and they are examples for me. In conclusion, I want to repeat, that the human body isn’t limited. I hope that every person in their future will able to open their extra abilities.
My Favorite Teacher

My favorite teacher is Keith French at Literacy Volunteers. I like his class very much because I always learn a lot how to write and read. His class is very interesting. When I do not understand, he explains everything very well. Each class is different and interesting. I would like to continue for many more years in his class. Thanks, Keith. Thanks to everyone who makes this class possible.

Student: Anselma
Country: Mexico
Tutor: Keith French
Site: 14 West Main Street, Meriden

2019 Is My Year to Shine!

I am Bonnie writing this letter to tell my tutors thanks for the help. I will like to read very good soon and to read the Bible. I will also like to learn how to text my grandchildren and get my GED pretty soon. And one day to fly on my own to visit my family. I love myself. I think my own thoughts. I am myself, nobody else! I don’t want to be nobody else but me.

Student: Bonnie
Country: USA
Tutors: Jade Thomas, Nina Fawcett
Site: The Towers Senior Community, New Haven
My name is Kalpana Thapa. My voice is here! I learn English at La Casa Adult class. English is my second language in America. Mostly at home I cannot get a chance to speak English because I am alone in my house. That causes difficulty to speak. However, I have learned some English from class.

My class is good. All friends are good, just like a home in class. Teachers are good, just like a good parent. So, I am very happy in class. Two hours easily go by reading and speaking in class. The evening extension class is very good. All students are very happy. Students speak English with me in class. People from different countries come to this class to learn English. This is an adult free language class. Students can learn for a long time for free. All students speak nicely in class. We are all English language students only. The English language is the only international language in the world.

So, “Thanks for All”

Student: Kalpana
Country: Nepal
Tutors: Robert Glen, Donald Desmond
Site: La Casa, New Haven

Thank You

This is a time in my life I am learning how to read and write. I feel good about myself right now. I was blessed with a good teacher. She has a wonderful way of helping me to understand what she teaches me. I have to thank Literacy Volunteer program for helping me.

Student: Ollie
Country: USA
Tutor: Melinda Charles
Site: Barnes & Noble, Milford
Thanking Volunteers

My Story

First of all, I’d like to introduce myself.

My name is Gerson, I’m Brazilian, I’m 64 years old and I’ve been married to Rute for 42 years. I have 2 children and 3 grandchildren.

My personal story is:

I lived in Brazil until 2015 and there I worked as an Engineer and Business Administrator in some companies in Brazil and Latin America. I also speak Portuguese and Spanish.

In 1980 I graduated in Theology and, in parallel with my job, I served as pastor in volunteer work until 2015.

In 2015 I retired from my job and was invited by the Maranatha Christian Church in Brazil to run our churches in the USA. We have about 40 churches in the USA. Rute and I accepted the invitation.

We prepared our immigration documents at the American Consulate and the Immigration Department with R-1 VISA and initially went to the Boston Area, Massachusetts.

In October of 2018 we moved from Boston to Connecticut, where I am a pastor of the Church in Wallingford and other Churches. I live in Meriden.

The study of the English language is very important to any foreigner who moves to this country, and for me it is necessary to communicate with the American members and the children of our churches who have English as their first language.

Beyond learning the language, English classes provide information on history and way of life of the American people, which facilitates integration with the reality of this country.

Additionally, studying with Literacy Volunteers has been a rewarding experience. It is very useful to have contact with people from different countries and cultures, make new friends and share ideas and life projects.

In our experience, the most difficult aspect about living in the US is the American winter with its low temperatures and the snow.

It is also hard to stay away from our children and grandchildren who live in Brazil.
In conclusion, I’d like to express my special thanks to the dedicated volunteer tutor, Mr. Martin, Bob Martin who works hard helping me and the students of my class to develop better communication skills in English.
I am also very grateful to the donors and supporters who have helped this mission.
Thank you.

Student: Gerson  
Country: Brazil  
Tutor: Bob Martin  
Site: 14 West Main St., Meriden

Learning to Read
When I first came back to Connecticut from Rochester, NY, my Mother used to live at 40 South East Drive in New Haven, around the corner from Literacy Volunteers. I walked in and asked them could I come and join the reading class. They said yes. I was there for a couple of months and then they sent me to Adult Education on the boulevard. I couldn’t keep up with the classes, so I came back to Literacy Volunteers to ask for help. The staff helped me a lot. Right now my reading is ok because of the hard work of the staff. I am still being taught and looking forward to the future. I found a good foundation around the whole staff.

Student: Michael B  
Country: USA  
Tutor: Valerie R. Kilmartin  
Site: Literacy Resource Center 5 Science Park, New Haven
A Letter to Friends

I came to the USA about 30 years ago. English class was part of the curriculum when I was in high school and college in my native country. The expression “if you don’t use it, you lose it” applied to me, because when I came to USA I didn’t remember what I learned. It was recommended to watch children’s programs on television as they pronounce words very well. Sesame Street was one of my favorites. Public television had English classes years ago. I also attended an ESL group class, but I continued struggling with English, furthermore I had a little child. I heard about Literacy Volunteers of America and they offered one-to-one tutoring and babysitting. It was the best!

I like to give back. In return I offered babysitting while I was not in class and also tutored for the GED program that LVA offered. One of my students became a registered nurse after getting her GED. It was in this program when I became more fluent with the English language and the most important is the human part, I became lifelong friends with my tutors. After so many years, I still struggle with my pronunciation as people are having a hard time trying to understand me. I inquire about universities and ESL programs. I also tried online class but it didn’t help me as there is not the human part to correct pronunciation. I decided to go back to LVA because I needed one-to-one tutoring. I consider this is one of the greatest programs for ESL. I like the multiculturalism and I love my tutor.

Best Regards,

Carmen

Student: Carmen
Country: Belarus
Tutor: Linda Coppola
Site: Huntington Library, Shelton
Studying English

I could never imagine how my life was going to change in a short time. When I came to the United States with a proposal to improve my English, I took one of the most difficult decisions in my life. In Mexico I had a stable job and a satisfying life but there was something in my daily life that never made me feel totally comfortable because my dream has always been traveling to other countries and practicing my English. I was planning for many months and maybe years ago that I wanted to live abroad for some time, until one day I decided that if I wouldn’t do it at that moment, maybe it never will happen.

I decided to sign up in an English program in Southern Connecticut State University during Spring semester, and I have taken some classes at the Public Library of New Haven, with the support of my uncle and my aunt who let me live with them for this period. So I am here, learning every day, trying every day to enjoy my last moments here.

I’m almost finished with my courses but I am very proud of my advanced skills, and the inspiration that some of my teachers have given me. I will come back to Mexico next month but I carry with me the most wonderful experiences of my short stay here, meeting people from many countries, knowing new cultures and customs from them. But the most important thing is that I never will forget those emotions that being in this country have made me feel, the nice people that I meet, and my excellent teachers that have inspired me to be able to realize my goals.

Student: Zyanya
Country: Mexico
Tutors: David Cowell, Elizabeth Greenspan
Site: Mitchell Library, New Haven
My Journey to Read

Let me briefly explain that I was brought up in the South where there was not a lot of schooling, at least not where I lived. I have always found it difficult to be in a setting where reading was necessary and I would just somehow finagle my way through it. My fiancé has many times attempted different forms in which to teach myself to read, but finally came across a flyer where tutoring was available for people with difficulty in reading. This was the beginning and where I met Laura. Laura is the woman who started me on my way to finding a tutor. My tutor’s name is Christina and she has brought me to where I am today in my reading, which is a lot further than I was months ago. I am so grateful to Christina and Laura in their instrumental part in my quest to become a better reader.

Student: Theresa
Country: USA
Tutor: Christina McLaughlin
Site: Fair Haven Library, New Haven
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