



**Literacy Volunteers
of Somerset County**

Executive Director's Annual Report

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Celebrating Strength in Community

Strength in Community

Celebrating LVSC's treasured community:

- Brave students
- Devoted volunteers
- Determined partners
- Committed donors

Starting with the big picture.

2023: returned to pre-pandemic levels of service

2024: last year, we celebrated significant expansion

- Increased programming to reach more students
- Doubled space, staff, and budget to meet demand
- Grew with government funding, volunteer enthusiasm, donor support

2025: this year

- Continuing to see increased demand
- Serving more students, training more tutors, increasing tutor support
- Operationalizing prior year expansion
- Addressing changing needs of immigrant population
- Keeping an eye on the changing funding landscape



**Literacy Volunteers
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Student Updates

Welcome New Students!

Student applications continue to increase.

- **326 assessed (202 prior year)**
 - *During 11 assessment sessions*
 - *By 16 volunteers – 90 hours of service!*



Serving a Record Number

650+ unique students served

(500 last year)

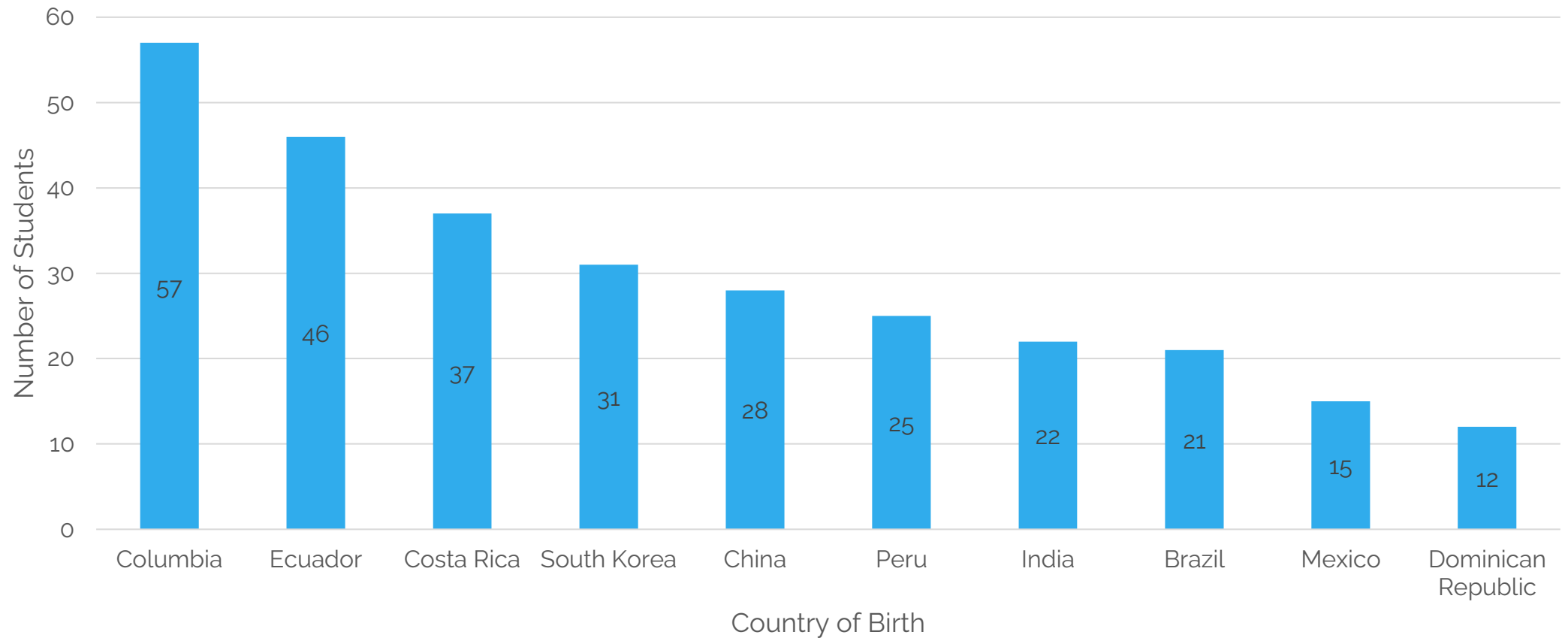
- **315 tutored**
- **216 attended a beginner class or small group**
- **125 attended a conversation group**
- **34 citizenship prep (22 new citizens!)**

Congratulations to all for goals accomplished big and small!



Students Come from 51 Different Countries

LVSC Student Birthplace, Top 10



Expanded Options for Beginner-Level Students

Virtual Introductory Classes

- 8th year in a row!
- Reached 15 students

Small Group Tutoring

- 13 groups
- Reached 50 students
- Using online curriculum



Expanded Options for Beginner-Level Students, cont.

First Steps Basic English

- Collaborative program; began July 2023
- Funded by Somerset County American Rescue Plan funds
- In-person classes in underserved communities
- LVSC is program lead

This year:

- Went from pilot stage to full implementation
- **11 classes reached 187 students**
- **7 guest presentations**
 - Nutrition
 - Affordable healthcare
 - Information for new immigrants

Partners:

- Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (funded partner)
- Raritan Valley Community College/Hunterdon County ESC (teaching partners)
- Libraires and other locations



Statewide Recognition

for beginner-level programming

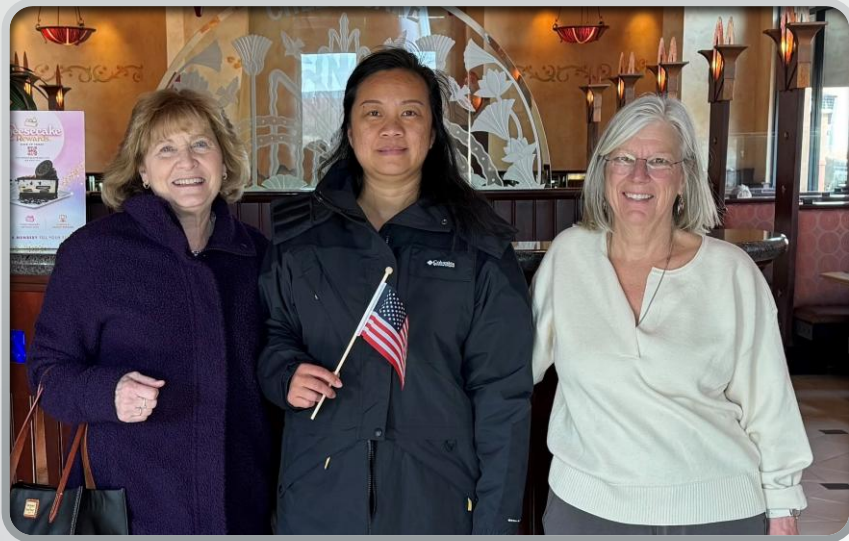
- LVSC received the *Alice M. Leppert Award for Outstanding Affiliate Achievement*
- Awarded by Literacy NJ for LVSC's role as lead agency on the First Steps Basic English program



Student Support

There is fear and uncertainty in the immigrant community. LVSC is committed to:

- Providing a welcoming, compassionate space to learn English
- Helping students become U.S. citizens
- Sharing accurate and timely information
- Making referrals to reliable sources of information and trusted places to find assistance
- Keeping LVSC a “happy place”





**Literacy Volunteers
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Volunteer Updates

LVSC Volunteers are THE BEST



216 volunteers (195 prior year)

- 196 tutors
- 13 conversation group leaders
- 14 U.S. citizenship preparation tutors
- 16 assessors
- 10 event volunteers
- 6,250 hours of volunteer service -- a \$217,000 value!

Welcome New Tutors!

We are continuously recruiting and training new tutors to keep up with student need.

- 80 tutors trained (76 prior year)
- 26 tutor information sessions
- 4 tutor training workshops, including 1st in-person since 2020



Tutor Support

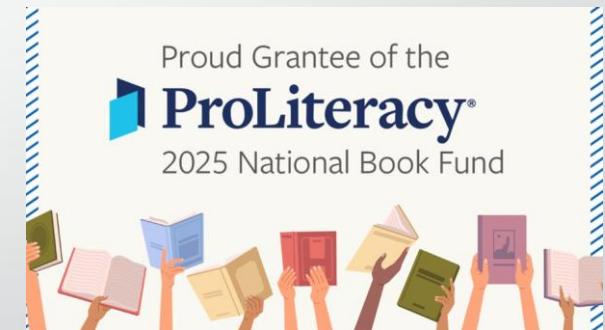
Popular Student Success Center

- Weekly conversation group
- 4 weekly tutoring sessions
- Tutor support sessions



Lending Library Growing

- National Book Fund Grant: \$2,000 for books
- 240 unique titles available
- 182 materials loaned to tutors



Tutor Outreach Increasing

- Introduced Tutor of the Month Program
- Held 7 tutor support groups
- Sent monthly tutor resource emails
- Initiated quarterly tutor contact

Congratulations to the Inaugural Tutors of the Month



Bryant Wong
December 2024



Beth Noble
January 2025



Sau Steiner
February 2025



Doreen Ladinski
March 2025



Jim Reilly
April 2025



Janet Billey
May 2025



Linda Conroy
June 2025

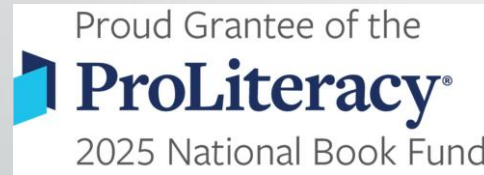


**Literacy Volunteers
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Partnerships

Thank You, Community Partners

*Working together, we can provide
greater depth and breadth of service.
LVSC is lucky to partner with these
remarkable organizations.*



Family Literacy Partnership

Childhood literacy is crucial for developing lifelong literacy skills and has a direct impact on adult literacy levels.

- Shared the love of reading with 60+ Middle Earth students
- Read a story & talked about community service
- Offered book give-a-way (books donated by Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset)
- Introduced our Literacy Dog-in-Training, Daisy





**Literacy Volunteers
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Behind the Scenes

Thank You, Staff!

*The part-time staff is dedicated, caring, concerned,
talented, creative, hard-working and fun.*

Susan Engelstein, Program & Events Manager

Stella Nieves, Literacy Navigator

Jennifer Kushinka, Tutor Support Manager

Lauren Randolph, Tutor Trainer



Staff Changes

Goodbye & Thank You:
Lisa Ries, Student Success Manager



Background

- Retired from a career at J&J in Human Resources
- Trained tutor: 2021 Tutor of the Year
- Student Success Manager June 2022-August 2024
- Moved out of state

Accomplishments

- Provided vision for Student Success Center
- Created Student Success Center Lending Library
- Originated the tutor support role
- Member of Cultural Connections project team

Welcome:
Jennifer Kushinka, Tutor Support Manager



Background

- Retired from lifelong career as radio newscaster and reporter
- Former LVSC tutor with 20 years of experience
- 2016 Tutor of the Year & 2024 Martha Davis Award for Outstanding Service

Job Function

- Serve as tutor mentor
- Support tutor-student matches and re-matches
- Shares tutoring resources/tutoring techniques
- Conduct tutor support groups
- Maintain Student Success Center and Lending Library
- Implement tutor recognition programs



**Literacy Volunteers
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Thank You, Board of Trustees!

LVSC's board members serve as trusted advisors, safeguarding the LVSC mission and ensuring its financial stability. They are generous, smart, and forward-thinking.

- **13 members**
- **Bring diverse expertise** →
- **All volunteers**

Information
Technology

Actuary

Librarian

Financial
Advisor

CPAs

Immigration
Attorney

Business
Development

Current/form
er tutors (4)

Pastor

Corporate
Communications

Social Policy
Foundation
Chair

Litigation
Attorney

Board Changes

*Welcome to Incoming Trustee,
Rachel E. Campbell, Esq.*



*Thank you to Outgoing Trustees,
Aubrey Flanagan & Hector Herrera*



Introducing the New Executive Slate

Effective July 1, 2025



**Scott Curtis, CFP,
President**



**Lisa Browne, LL.B,
Vice President**



**Peter Russell, CPA Inactive,
Treasurer**



**Dana Ponciroli,
Recording Secretary**



**Literacy Volunteers
of Somerset County**

Board of Trustees

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Scott Curtis, CFP, President

Lisa Browne, LL.B, Vice President

Peter Russell, CPA-Inactive, Treasurer

Dana Ponciroli, Recording Secretary

TRUSTEES

Felice Armenio

Snehal Batra, Esq.

Rachel E. Campbell, Esq.

Mary Curtis Horowitz

Rev. Louis A. Mattina

Tho Ngo, FCAS, MAAA

Cathy Peckens, M.B.A.

Mary Riccardi, CPA

Yvonne Selander



**Literacy Volunteers
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Fundraising

Thank You, Foundation & Corporate Donors

(July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)



\$1,000-\$2,499

- ProLiteracy 2025 National Book Fund
- PSEG Foundation
- Thrivent Financial

\$2,500-\$4,999

- NJ Community Fund by Johnson & Johnson
- Mary Curtis Horowitz Foundation
- Nora Roberts Foundation
- Shapiro Family Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

- Munich Re America
- The Fred C. Rummel Foundation
- Ullmann Family Foundation
- Plus, Matching Gifts & Volunteer Grants*

\$15,000-\$19,999

- George H. and Estelle M. Sands Foundation

\$20,000 - \$29,999

- Billian Family Charitable Foundation

\$30,000+

- Individual Donors
- State of NJ
- Somerset County – American Rescue Plan Funds

**Matching Gifts & Volunteer Grants*

- *Exxon Mobile*
- *Johnson & Johnson*
- *Munich Re America*
- *Nationwide*
- *Prudential*
- *Thrivent Financial*

Thank You, Event Sponsors

(July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

\$150 - \$299

- Anonymous
- Four Points Group at Morgan Stanley
- Anita Kuchma
- NPZ Law Group, P.C.
- Kathy Wurster

\$300 - \$499

- Edison Research
- Paul Malinske
- NextT Fit Clubs, Hillsborough
- PSE&G
- Somerset Pediatric Group
- The Viscusi Family

\$500 - \$999

- American Legion Post 304, Manville, NJ
- Cheri & Brian Auger
- ENT and Allergy Associates
- Johanna Wiseman, RE/MAX Preferred Professionals
- Medicor Cardiology
- Midwest Tape
- PeopleCare Center for Nonprofits
- Total Maintenance Pro



\$1,000-\$2,500

- The Riccardi Family
- Mary Curtis Horowitz
- Newroads Financial Group
- Somerset Valley Players
- Scott Curtis CFP, Thrivent Financial



**Literacy Volunteers
of Somerset County**

Two Super Fun *FUN*draising Events

Net Income:
\$31,000

Garden of Literacy Brunch & Baskets



Golf Fore Literacy

What's Next?

Maintain this higher level of service

- Continued focus on tutor recruitment and retention efforts – serve more students
- Celebrate 45th anniversary in 2026!
- Stay current/respond to the changing needs of the immigrant population
- Identify funding streams to supplement government funding



**Literacy Volunteers
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Circling Back:

Strength in Community

“

Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the **world**.

”

– Desmond Tutu

Thank you LVSC community, for doing your bit of good and making our community stronger.



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