

## 40 Years of Success and Service

Patricia Peasley Rajala was born on Long Island, New York and raised in New Hyde Park.

Her parents were both educators. Her mother Patricia was an Elementary School Teacher; and her father Peter was a Professor of Economics at Fordham University.

Pat earned her undergraduate degree from Marymount College, Tarrytown and her Masters in Business Administration from Stanford University.

1974 Pat married Tom Rajala and moved to Yonkers. Both commuted to New York City for jobs in advertising.

Pat & Tom's first daughter Katherine was born in 1977 and a year later they moved to Mount Vernon.

In 1979, Pat became involved with Literacy Volunteers of Mount Vernon, tutoring Basic Education students.

In 1980, the Rajala's welcomed their second daughter Christina.

During the 1980s and early 90's, Pat transitioned into the not-for-profit world, working for the Credit Research Foundation and then Executive Women in Human Services.

During those years, Pat served on the Boards of Directors of several not-for-profits, first Literacy Volunteers of Mount Vernon, and then with other local LV agencies – Northern Westchester, Mount Vernon, White Plains, Yonkers, the Rivertowns, and New Rochelle.

When these agencies merged in 1983 to create Literacy Volunteers of Westchester, Pat was invited to be part of that process and to join the Board of the new Literacy Volunteers of Westchester. That organization, along with Literacy Volunteers of Rockland, is now known as Literacy Solutions NY.

Pat was elected Board Chair, and following an exhaustive search for a new agency Executive Director, in 1992 Pat was asked by the Board to become the new Executive Director.

Pat's mission was to increase the professionalism of the organization. Toward that end, more attention was paid to training for both staff and volunteers; to developing outside funding from foundations and corporations; and becoming involved with the NYS and national literacy organization, Literacy Volunteers of America.

In the late 90's and early 2000's, Pat took on an additional role with the national organization, now known as ProLiteracy. In her duties with ProLiteracy, Pat and a dedicated team created and disseminated plans for fundraising events to be held throughout the nationwide ProLiteracy network. These events helped raise funds for local Literacy organizations, including Literacy Solutions NY.

One of the capacity-building projects Pat spearheaded for LSNY was the application for and subsequent management of a large number of Americorps/VISTA Volunteers. These volunteers worked directly with students, planned events, and did local outreach and support for new tutors. Some of those volunteers are still with us today as treasured staff.

In 2002, Pat made her Network Television debut on Ricky Lake, providing expert advice to guests who revealed to their families or friends that they do not know how to read, on the services available from Literacy Volunteers agencies across the country.

In 2005 -- with funds provided by a grant Pat secured from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) – LSNY, in cooperation with Columbia Teachers College, designed and disseminated an English Language curriculum called "U.S. Civics for Immigrants: From Native Language to English Literacy". This curriculum continues to be used today by LSNY, and is in use by many other Literacy agencies and in many classrooms.

In 2013, Pat secured a new NYSED grant to establish the unique "Haverstraw Literacy Zone", a program providing English literacy classes, case management, and outreach services to residents of the Village of Haverstraw in Rockland County. It is one of only 51 Literacy Zones statewide.

In 2016, under Pat's leadership, LSNY was awarded a contract by the New York State Dept. of State to implement a Rockland County Office for New Americans. This program offers literacy and citizenship services to new arrivals, many of whom are eager to become American citizens.

Additionally, under Pat's leadership, LSNY has developed industry-based curricula to provide employment centered ESOL for hospitality industry personnel.

Currently, Pat serves as CEO/Pres of Literacy Solutions NY, Inc. (LSNY) which includes Westchester & Rockland divisions of LSNY tutor and ESOL programs, the Haverstraw Literacy Zone, and the Rockland Office for New Americans. She is an active member of Literacy New York, the State organization for Literacy Volunteers, of which LSNY is the largest affiliate, as well as a member of the Rockland Workforce Development Board.