

Reaching Up, Reaching Out

Annual Report 2007



LVA

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Literacy Volunteers of America- Danbury, Inc.

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2007

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Our Mission

LVA's Mission is to enable a diverse population of adults to improve English language and other academic skills needed to realize their full potential as successful community members.

To accomplish this we:

- Offer a full range of courses using volunteer instructors under the guidance of professionals.
- Provide a unique teaching/ learning approach which is personalized, flexible and oriented to excellence.
- Create an effective workforce through partnerships with local businesses.
- Build community by introducing American culture and promote civic responsibility and participation.



From the Director...

Reaching Out, Reaching Up

*Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp -
or what's a heaven for?*

Robert Browning
English poet (1812 - 1889)



There are a lot of ways to say it—the idea of striving to go beyond the certain, the comfortable. Our students could have stayed as they were—in fact, sadly, too many do. Others begin the long journey, only to fall by the wayside. But there is always another tomorrow, another chance to try, try again. Some never begin. They often say, “No, I’m not ready.” To those who say that, my reply is the lesser known Eleanor Roosevelt comment, “If we wait till we’re ready, we’ll never get started.”

In a sense, we here have never been “ready,” but it has never stopped us from beginning, learning and beginning again. This year, we began again, with new classes, new techniques and new materials. By the time you read this we will have moved into a new building at a new location. It’s an old, historic building, with bright, modern classrooms.

As you look through our report you will see a new look, with new subjects and new ways of presenting the courses. The goal is the same, however—gaining the skills to go on to more and higher learning, to achieve success in America.

So, we are beginning again—getting better—reaching out and reaching up.

Tom

Board of Directors

Paul Larsen, President

Greg Brauneisen

Harvey Center

Michael Chun

Marge Davidson

Bruce Frank

Tino Marcal

Tom Pinkham Jr.

2007

A Year of Growth, A Year of Decision

2007

We continued to develop our school for adults along academic lines. We divided our learning programs into three levels: Basic, High School (GED), and University, with a new emphasis on the skills necessary to go on to higher level academic or vocational training.



We continued our short seven week “semester” system, thus allowing easier entry and more reasonable “chunks” of teaching/learning experience for both students and teachers.

We formalized our learning into regular, scheduled class sessions for each level, but... We continued the LVA tradition of individualized “extra help” sessions to bolster our formal learning courses.

We added courses in American history at both the GED and University levels, giving students the opportunity to learn about our culture through the study of our history.

We added a college-level English course for our most advanced students, to prepare them for the College Level Exam.

We will add study skills and academic vocabulary for our advance students.

We will add basic math and pre-algebra.



Reach for the Stars!

Academic Studies I

Basic Academics for Adults

Great Beginnings



“Can you teach me?”

They come to us hesitatingly, often referred or even accompanied by a friend. They often have little more than 5 or 6 years of education in a one-room schoolhouse in some distant land, in some language other than English

Our student counselors (often assisted by senior level students) patiently explain how we work and how it will work for them! First classes sometimes use bilingual instructors as an introduction.

They begin learning—not just learning English, but learning how to learn—learning to use language in written form—learning how to look for and find information—learning how to think about things.

There is much talk, too. Small groups of learners stay together until one or more of their number is ready to move on – and move up!

Learning about each other becomes an important part of the learning experience—as important as the progress, which we measure in numerous ways, including the nationally recognized CASAS test. And though they work in classes, “extra help” is always available, through our special volunteer tutors, who donate countless hours to reinforce the classroom work.

More Stars

Academic Studies II

Reaching Up

“I had no time for high school.”

We hear it all the time. Whether they are from the local neighborhood, or thousands of miles away, the story is often the same.

They quit high school for a number of reasons, many of which are quite valid, such as helping the family. Now, with a young family, they realize that, in order to get ahead, they need to begin again, to pick up the pieces and gain the high school diploma (GED.)

“Those years were wasted.”

They often routinely disparage the learning they achieved in high school. The truth of the matter is, however, that those credits can be the building blocks, the foundation of a new beginning. Nothing is wasted, as we test and review records to begin to piece together an educational program that will lead to a valid high school diploma.

“You are special. This school is magic. I can feel love in the air.”

Sometimes our school is a magical place. When young people dare to dream they become inspired. When they are able to apply themselves to their goals, and given the help and direction they need to succeed, it seems like magic.



A Reach, Exceeding One's Grasp

Academic Studies, Level III

"The teachers are more than instructors. They are friends."

Classes are small, but even so, we continue our tradition of being accessible to students before and/or after class. We also offer extensive extra help sessions, delivered individually or in small groups by our very talented and well-educated volunteer tutors.



"I never thought college would be possible for me."

You can see it in their eyes. It is a kind of hunger for learning. Quite a few of our advanced students are doing okay. They have steady jobs, families, and a sense of place in the community.

Something is missing, however, when they come to us. They may be foreign-born, or children of immigrants, or even GED graduates who want something more. They are smart and ambitious, but they lack the tools to succeed in college. They lack the background, the vocabulary, the study skills, reading, writing and critical thinking skills and most important, they lack the confidence.

Confidence comes with proving to yourself that yes, you can do it. University-level instruction starts with high school-level texts, with basic grammar and academic vocabulary, but moves in a measured way to freshman-level English and history classes.



"It's hard, but I can do it."
Regardless of the support and encouragement of teachers and staff, the ultimate responsibility is on the student. (For a list of results, please turn to "A LOOK AT THE STARS" Page 8")

A Look at the Stars

(Follow up on some LVA graduates)

Our alumni are now out there, in our community as well as the world. They are building lives in our and communities, carrying the values and the skills they learned while studying at LVA.



In School

David '01 WestConn
Diana '04 Naugatuck CC
Ana I '05 Norwalk CC
Ana II '05 University in Ecuador
Perla '04 Norwalk CC
Victor '02 University of Ecuador
Priscilla '06 University in Costa Rica
Mario '99 WestConn
Amanda '03 WestConn
Jade '04 High School
Daniel '03 High School
Yuri '06 High School
Cristiani '05 University in Brazil
Musa '06 UConn
Ivan '06 High School
Wilson Jr. '04 University in Ecuador
Jing '07 Art School
"S" '04 NVCC
"L" '06 Graduate School in NYC
"M" '06 WestConn,
"B" '07 WestConn

Fernanda '07 University in Brazil
Maria '07 Office training
Consuelo '07 Technical training
George '07 Charter Oak College
Beatriz '07
Graduate School in Brazil

Professionals

Toshi '01 Corporate
Samara '02 Corporate
Michael '05 Corporate
Tian '01 Corporate
Fernando '05 Engineer
Juan '04 Banker
Nick '02 Doctor
Sergio '01 Commercial Pilot
Toni '03 Doctor
David '03 Doctor
Esther '04 Corporate
Beatrice '03 Accountant
Ana '06 Veterinarian
Isidro '05 Banking
Hong '07 Computers

In Local Business

Nadir '01 Self-employed
Jose '04 Restaurant manager
Wilson '03 Restaurant owner
Marisa '04 Real estate
Tino '96 Real estate (partner)
George '04 Restaurant manager
Carlos '02 Restaurant owner
Paula '05 Waitress
Felipe '05 Waiter
Orlando '01 Technician
Jose '03 Cook
Gilson '05 Store Manager
Linda '04 Office manager
Vanessa '05 Office manager

Our Teachers This Year...



The success of our school has always depended on attracting and retaining qualified, enthusiastic teachers. This year we were fortunate to attract a number of talented, dedicated bilingual instructors, including several upper-level students, who served as lead instructors, tutors and helpers. We also enjoyed the services of eight college students, six high school students and several retired professional educators. Together with our corps of volunteers -regular people from all walks of life they have contributed thousands of hours of service to the Danbury area community.

nationally recognized curricula, which include audiovisual materials, quizzes and tests. Self-teaching computerized programs are available as a supplement, or for students waiting for placement into a learning group.

Volunteers may serve as lead teachers, tutors and helpers.



The minimum volunteers commitment is for one semester (15 weeks), except for the summer sessions that are reduced to eight weeks to accommodate student volunteers. Most volunteers stay for much longer than the minimum volunteer. Many have been with us for years. Professional support includes individual conferences, local and regional get-togethers, as well as an annual convention with our national group, ProLiteracy World Wide.

Training and Support

Teachers and tutors are trained in a “hands on” manner. Before they even commit to the school, they are invited to sit in on classes at various levels. After that introduction, they choose a program that interests them, and training is directed toward that goal, using experienced instructors as mentors. Our system is supported by

Teaching America

Learning to speak English is not enough for our students. They long to learn and understand our culture, our history and our way of living. Last year we formally incorporated a program of cultural studies into our work. These include visits to historic sites, videos and readings from classic American works.

Field Trips

Our visits to historic places gave us the opportunity to educate our students on important events that have helped to shape our world today. They serve as a springboard to discussions of American life.



FDR Home and Museum

The FDR Home and Museum visit gave us the opportunity to discuss a very important era of American history -the period from the Great Depression to the end of World War II.



Danbury Historical Society

Our local historical society provided us with an introduction to local history, including the famous singer, Marian Anderson. Students learned about the development of Danbury, from a farming community, to a famous hatmaking city, and to what it is today.



Sturbridge Village

We try to make local as well as longer trips. This year, our longest trip was to Sturbridge Village, a re-created early 19th century New England village. Students wandered the grounds, spoke to the docents and gained an appreciation of how Americans lived in another century

Classwork

Part of their education, students are asked to read articles an American history and culture. Our library includes books and videos on American literature, at all reading levels.



Financial Results

Fiscal Year 2007

We enjoyed a very good fund raising year this year, with gifts and support coming from a variety of sources. The highlight of the year was our first ever "Wine Tasting Event," hosted by author and dear friend of LVA, the late Marjorie St. Aubyn. In addition to the gifts of cash, we received two new computers from IBM, as well as several smaller gifts of equipment and supplies from individual donors. We have also received pledges for the new office, to support our new computer lab and library.

Income

United Way	34,000.00
Corporations	30,500.00
Foundations	13,500.00
Local Government	14,726.00
State Government	20,387.00
Civic Groups	850.00
Individual Gifts	27,740.00
Student contributions	49,721.00
Events Earned Income	3,595.00
	5,600.00
Sales	2,182.00
Interest	328.00
Other	37.00
Total income	203,166.00

Expenses

Salaries, Taxes & Benefits	105,543.00
Professional Fees	3,751.00
Public Relations	1,173.00
Books & Materials	3,457.00
Fund Raising	1,552.00
Rent & Occupancy	58,555.00
Other	205.00
Total Expenses	174,236.00



Sponsors

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Advantage Realty
Altamirano Chiropractic
Center LLC
ATMI
Caraluzzi Markets
Citigroup Foundation
D. J. Ramey & Associates
GE Capital Foundation
GE Capital Solutions Foundation
IBM
John W. McWeeney, CPA
Leahy's Metered Gas Service,
Inc.
McCaffre Realty
Mill Plain Vet Group
New England Graphics
Northeast Utilities Service Com-
pany
People's Bank Employee
Peoples Bank
Pfizer
Pitney Bowes Corporation
Praxair,
PVS Management, LLC
Savings Bank of Danbury
Target Flavors, Inc.
Target
Tarry Medical Products,
Taunton Press
Tower Realty Corp.
Unicorn Management
Consultants, LLC
Underwriters Inc.
Union Savings Bank
United Alarm Services
Wal*Mart The Wal-mart
Foundation

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

America's Charities
City of Danbury - Cultural Com-
mission of Danbury
City of Danbury
Danbury Public Schools
First Congregational Church of
Bethel
Newtown Rotary Club
Ridgefield Woman's Club
Rotary Club of Ridgefield
Town of Brookfield
Town of New Fairfield
Town of Newtown
Town of Ridgefield
United Way Capital Area
United Way Merck
United Way of Northern
Fairfield County
United Way of Eastern Fairfield
County
Woman's Club of Danbury/New
Fairfield

FOUNDATIONS

Ceres Foundation
Weller Foundation

INDIVIDUALS

Agard, Irv
Agard, Margaret
Amdurer, Phyllis
Barker, Bruce
Berger, Irwin
Berner, Adriane
Bielawa, Henry
Bird, John
Bodnar, Michael
Carolan, Hugh
Center, Harvey
Charnin, Rochelle
Chun, Ohsoon
Chun, Victor

Churchill, Jr., James
Crocker, Sam
Davidson, Louise
Davidson, Marge
Davidson, William
DeLuryea, Lynda
Dembowski, Gregory
Enger, Rolf
Escola, Dwayne
Falkenstein, Jean
Farrington, Isabelle
Frank, Bruce
Furlong, Janis
Gardner, D.M.D., Donald
Gugliotti, Rocco
Heise, Judy
Hockman, Richard
Hollander, Janet
Hughson, Melody
Ingraham, Irene
Kaplan, Barry
Kaplan, David
Kawahara, Ferne
Kerley, Arthur
Krehbiel, Ernest
LaClair, Toni
Larsen, Paul
Malone, Frank
Mazzucco, Ward
McCready, Lauren
McEvoy, Bret
Mietelski, Mildred
Missigman, Gary
Muldoon, Paula D.
Mullen, Barbara
Nachbar, Shepherd
Padilla, Jose
Park, Joni
Perrin, Sheila
Petersen, Gail
Pinkham, Tom
Rhines, Betsy
Saadi, Thomas
Schneider, Margaret
Settzo, Carolyn
Shapiro, David

Sorcek, Julie
Stewart, Kathleen
Sutherland, Paul
Voves, Joseph
Voyentzie, Diane
Weisman, Fred
Wurtmann, Art
Wurtmann, Betsy
Young, Roy
Abbey, Crystal
Bird, Colleen
Chun, Mary Margaret
Collins, Janet
Connor, Gardner
Cuhnick, Chris
Heffernan, Mary
Jacobson, Bunny
Jaeger, Jacques
Keegan, Anne-Marie
Kelly, Julia
Lerz, Eleanore
Mazzucco, Sue
Moody, Pat
Nussle, Wendee
O'Hern, John
Orsino, Patricia
Parrella, Alfred
Pointon, Deb
Rocky, Joseph
Scala, Lucy
Schweitzer, Beth
Sheehan, Mark
SLM Services, Inc.
Stanford, Gary
Stirling, Mark
Strother, Gordon
Tedesco, Elaine
Uziel, Albert
Webb, Jacquelin
Chun, Michael
Pinkham, Thomas Jr
Pinkham, Thomas Sr