“Enlarging the place of our tent”
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**Mission Statement**

“Our mission is to enable a diverse population to improve their 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.

**Board of Directors**

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I always like to talk to new students. I tell them that they have made a good choice, an important choice, to invest in themselves and their future. They are often confused. They cannot easily see the connection, but they sense something about themselves—about possibilities. Our job as a school is to turn those thoughts into expectations, to help prepare them for good things to come—to get them to “enlarge the places of their tents.”

Just as our students do, we all get into a rut sometimes. I used to call that, “the bigotry of low expectations,” but that is no longer true. We hold, as a group, I believe, the highest expectations of success for our students, higher, very often, than they hold for themselves.

Individually, and as a school, we not only teach, we dream and encourage, tutor and plan, enable and even open doors, just as the author, Hinton Hill suggests in his book, *A Letter to My Brothers*. We strive to make the vision of success—real success—a reality for them. We help them learn to have great expectations—to dream the big dreams, “to stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.”

But what of ourselves? Have we been, “Enlarging the place” of our LVA tent? Have we lengthened our cords, strengthened our stakes? Are we anticipating better things?

The exhortation of Isaiah reminds me that, in spite of all we have done, it will mean little if we fail to prepare for and expect bigger and better things. With these thoughts in mind, I have challenged my board of directors to support a multi-year plan that will include everything needed to meet the needs of the 21st century. That will include not only basic education, but secondary education, vocational education and, eventually, full accreditation as a nonprofit junior college.

We have become a special school for the special people we serve. Now it is time to prepare for the next logical step—growth!

Tom Pinkham
About 2008

In 2008 we enjoyed a year of great successes:

We moved into the historic Settle Insurance building at the end of 2007.

We further refined our academic model, to include small classes and one-on-one “extra help” tutorials.

We upgraded the Isabelle Farrington Library and Conference room, through generous donations from Mrs. Farrington.

We completed the installation of a new computer room through the generous gift of an anonymous donor.

We began the process that will result in our being fully accredited as an English Language School.

We made our school more accessible with scholarships for the most needy, most worthy students.

We continued to recruit and train a corps of well-qualified, highly committed teachers and tutors.

This Year...

We added a third academic level—a kind of post-graduate study for our growing list of university-level students who want and need tutorial help. These are working adults whose English is competent, but are striving to reach another level of excellence.

These students are taught via the tutorial method. Sometimes they even send us their written work via the internet. Some are early morning or late afternoon students.

We added math and algebra classes to our course mix.

We added TOEFL preparation as a kind of capstone class for our most senior students.

We added American Civics to our “Learn America” project.

We added computer usage as a part of every course, at every level.

We will add... Vocational courses in computers.

Saturday morning classes.

And...
Our Students

They come to us from all over the world, with only one thing in common - desire - The desire to study, to learn and... to succeed. With so many different backgrounds, including different cultures and educational background, with so many responsibilities to family members, both here and back home, our students frequently make big sacrifices to come, to study, and to succeed...
STRETCH WIDE YOUR COUTAINTS...

ACADEMIC WORK AT LVA

“No one Ever Rose to Low Expectations…”

A new study by an independent research group now supports what we have always known, that, “No one ever rose to low expectations.” The survey, “Community College Survey of Student Engagement” (Cessie,) asked community college students about their learning experiences. They found —what we have known for some time— that students who feel engaged (and supported) tend to do better.

ACADEMIC I – Get the High School Diploma

These students are beginning a long academic road that will lead them to higher education. There are three main elements to this experience. Reading, thinking critically about the reading, and expressing one's thoughts orally and in writing. To do so, one needs the tools—vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Our unique system of small classes and extra help tutorials insures that students will acquire those tools.

ACADEMIC II – Get into College

These students have many, but not all the tools to succeed. At this level they learn the difference between spoken English and the English of writing—especially academic writing. These students learn to use the internet to research a question and critically examine the information.

ACADEMIC III – Succeed in College

These students have achieved a degree of success—they have been accepted into a college or community college. As non-native English speakers however, they are still unsure. They come to us as tutorial students, for “extra help” with reports, term papers and materials that they didn’t understand. Helping them learn to express their ideas is a big part of the tutor’s role—just as important as correcting grammar and usage.
Today there is a chasm, a wide and deep rift between expectations and reality—between dreams of education and a better life and the reality of a college education. The reality is that for adult high school equivalency graduates, the odds of completing a four year course of college study are almost nil. Fewer than 5% of those adults entering community college will complete their course of study.

Recognizing this problem, we have developed a small but significant program of formal study for potential college students, emphasizing study skills, reading, writing and grammar. In doing so, we have attempted to duplicate the American classroom experience, requiring independent research and critical thinking.

Our classes are small however—no larger than 10 students—and informal. They are intense. Learning doesn’t end when the class ends. All students have the option of taking 50 minutes of “extra help” tutorials on a subject of their choice.

In this format, the teacher becomes an “enabler”—more than an information giver—a senior colleague and consultant, working with these adult students toward a mutual goal.

The goal is further study, college or junior college, to prepare to pursue a profession or career.

…to strengthen their stakes…to expand to the right and to the left.
### Star Gazing...

...a look at our graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Professional</strong></th>
<th><strong>Corporate</strong></th>
<th><strong>Local Business</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nick (02) Doctor</td>
<td>Toshi (01)</td>
<td>Nadir (01) Self-employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony (03) Doctor</td>
<td>Samara (02)</td>
<td>Jose (04) Restaurant Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>David (03) Doctor</td>
<td>Michael (05)</td>
<td>Wilson (03) Restaurant Owner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ana (06) Doctor</td>
<td>Tian (01)</td>
<td>Marisa (04) Real Estate Owner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sergio (01) Pilot</td>
<td>Esther (04)</td>
<td>Tino (96) Real Estate Partner</td>
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<td>Fernando (05) Engineer</td>
<td>Juan (04)</td>
<td>George (04) Restaurant Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ana (06) Veterinarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isidro (05) Banking</td>
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<td>Anita (05) Restaurant Owner</td>
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<th><strong>In School</strong></th>
<th><strong>University</strong></th>
<th><strong>College</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ana I (05)</td>
<td>University</td>
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<td>Ana II (05)</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>David (01)</td>
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<td>Amanda (06)</td>
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<td>Gustavo (06)</td>
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**Graduates**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toshi (01)</td>
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<td>Samara (02)</td>
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| Victor (02)     |
| David (01)      |
| Diana (04)      |
| Anita (05)      |
| Priscilla (06)  |
| Mario (99)      |
| Cristiani (05)  |

| Toshi (01)       |
| Samara (02)      |
| Michael (05)     |
| Tian (01)        |
| Esther (04)      |
| Juan (04)        |
| Nadir (01)       |
| Jose (04)        |
| Wilson (03)      |
| Marisa (04)      |
| Tino (96)        |
| George (04)      |
| Carlos (02)      |
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| Orlando (01)     |
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| Toshi (01)       |
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| Victor (02)      |
| David (01)       |
| Diana (04)       |
| Anita (05)       |
| Priscilla (06)   |
| Mario (99)       |
| Cristiani (05)   |
TEACHERS AND TUTORS

Our unique system of teaching and learning requires special people to serve our students. Our teachers and tutors are those special people. They come to us out of a deep desire to work with our learners. They are thoughtful and patient, forming relationships with their students that are personal, but intellectually challenging.

TRAINING

Our hands-on training method ensures that all teachers and tutors are knowledgeable about our methods and materials. All our teachers and tutors are well-educated. Some have advanced degrees in a variety of fields, including law, teaching, English and history. We encourage our teachers to continue their education, with courses and seminars—formal and informal learning situations—that they can bring to their students.
Learning the language of America is not enough for our students. They hunger to know our history and culture as well. Through the Cultural Commission of the City of Danbury, we are able to offer our students a unique opportunity to explore some of our local historical and culture sites.

Trips include the Danbury Historical Society, the New England Military Museum, Hyde Park (home of FDR,) and Sturbridge Village.

These trips are integrated with our class work. They serve as reinforcement of previous learning and a springboard to further discussion and learning.
Despite a faltering economy, fiscal 2008 proved very successful. Corporate support continued from IBM, with contributions of additional computers. Pitney Bowes and GE Capital Solutions also helped, as did a number of local corporations.

Individual donations from philanthropist Isabelle Farrington, and former LVA board president Mary Kiniry led our list of loyal supporters. Those gifts enabled us to refurbish our library and conference room.

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