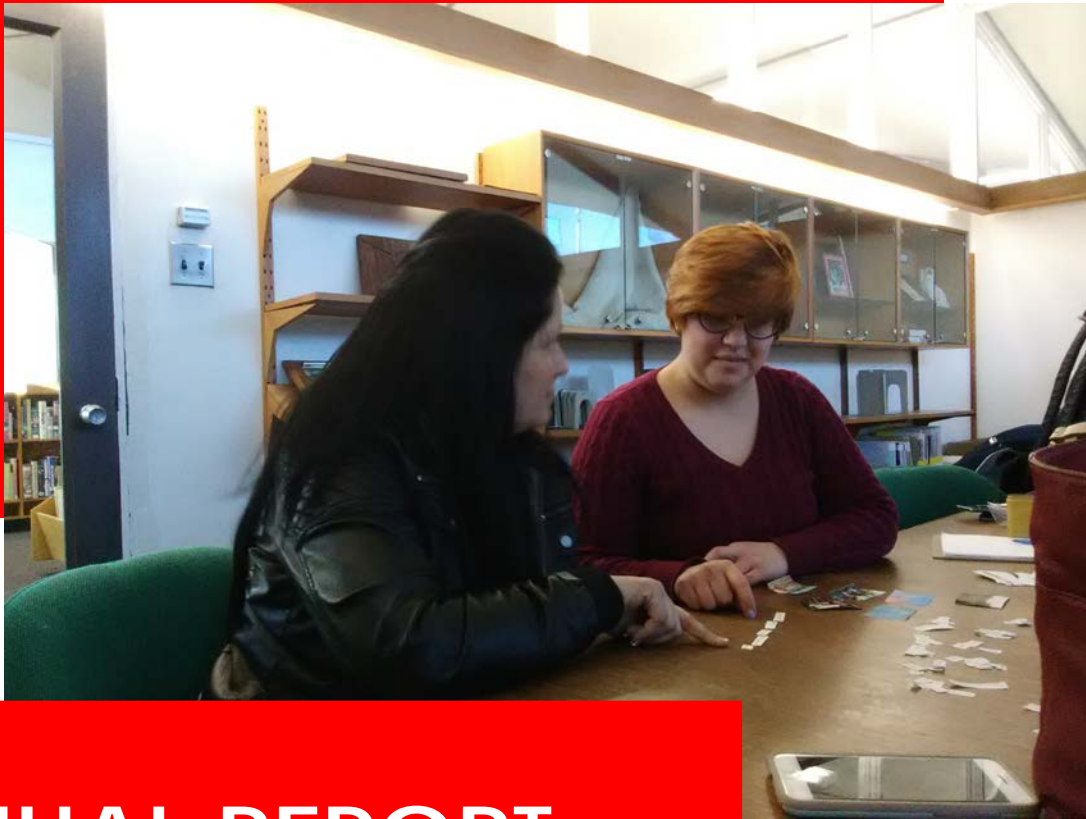




LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTACHUSETT AREA



**ANNUAL REPORT
2020**

OUR YEAR, OUR COMMUNITY

Mission

Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area promotes literacy in northern Worcester and Middlesex counties by providing free, confidential, and individualized tutoring to adults in basic literacy and English to speakers of other languages (ESOL).



From the President

The year 2020 has been an extraordinary time for America. We have seen the democratic process unfold since the Spring, we have seen the ravages of COVID-19 in our communities and on our nation, and we have grappled with matters of social and racial justice that have caused us to focus as communities, and individuals, on examining bias and understanding better people who are not like ourselves.

Each of these series of events has affected people throughout the Montachusett Region, and has also deeply affected our organization, Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area. The pandemic response has made necessary the delivery of tutoring, instruction, and support services remotely or socially distanced. For the first time in our history our offices were closed to help combat the spread of the virus. We all have been fighting this pandemic long and hard and we will continue to do so until we fight this virus.

Never before have literacy and democracy been more important to our society. Every person should have the opportunity to develop their skills in reading and writing so he or she may become better informed, better prepared, and better able to navigate society today. Every immigrant seeking American citizenship also deserves the same. We will continue to serve

our students, tutors and volunteers with the highest quality services that have become our hallmark well into 2021 and beyond.

I wish to thank all our volunteers, tutors, and donors. Our success is not possible without your commitment, support, and generosity. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to congratulate all the successes achieved by our students in our literacy and citizenship programs. Your hard work is inspiring, and we could not be more proud to be part of your journey!

With best regards for a safe, healthy, and joyful 2021,

Joe Stiso
President
Board of Directors

From the Program Coordinator

To quote another non-profit leader in the area, 2019-2020 was a good year, until it wasn't. We started off the year well with old programs and some new, with a goal of increasing the number of students we serve, and then we were thrown a curve ball. Over the past year I have been impressed by the resourcefulness and resilience of our students, tutors, and our communities. Our staff, board, tutors, and students have been supporting each other as we have transitioned from in-person to remote operations in response to the pandemic. It has not been easy, but I am proud of our tutors and students who have learned new tools in order to keep working together during this time. An area non-profit funder asked what might be a barrier for our students, and my response was "bandwidth," both literal and figurative. Many of our tutors and students are confronted with a loss of work, a change of work, their children's remote schooling, and the closures and changes in access to so many of our usual resources, on top of the uncertainty of being able to meet some basic needs, such as food and housing. Some students literally have not had Internet access or computers in order to work with their tutors; some students do not have the time, energy, focus, or quiet to be able to work with their tutor given the time, energy, and focus that they have to give to everything else. Some students are, yes, unfortunately being left behind on the other side of the digital divide.

Looking Ahead

As difficult as the past eight months have been, there have been some silver linings to the gray coronavirus cloud. Working online with a tutor for some students actually removed a barrier of time and distance. For those who have made the transition to virtual work, it can surmount the barriers of transportation and schedule. We were able to offer the app Cell-Ed to students to use on their phones, tablets, or computers when they couldn't work with a tutor. We have learned to use new tools, like Zoom and WhatsApp that will stay in our toolbox. Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts is designing an online tutor training, and we plan to train tutors remotely, which will allow us to expand our training opportunities into the future. We plan to focus on establishing online conversation groups that will serve students on our waiting list and last beyond the pandemic. We plan to offer an online practice citizenship interview session that will complement the online application assistance that Project Citizenship is offering. Before the pandemic, citizenship applicants would have to travel to Lowell or Worcester to get assistance with applications, but now can access Project Citizenship's services remotely. I hope that next July we can actually gather at a real 4th of July picnic.

Amy West
Program Coordinator
November, 2020

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

We filled our year with an international potluck, giftwrapping, citizenship class, citizenship study group, conversation circles, volunteer information sessions, and tutor trainings.

International Potluck and 2019 Annual Meeting



1 International Potluck and Annual Meeting, September 2019

We held our International Potluck and Annual Meeting in September, where we heard from our student Hamed and saw the beautiful artwork of his wife Sahar, another LVMont student. Long-time tutor Mary Metzger received the 2019 Gloria Maybury Award. Mary has been a Basic Literacy with LVMont for a long time and closely involved with the Ayer Public Library, one of our partner libraries. She went through the ESOL tutor training in May 2019, along with our 2020 Gloria Maybury Award winner, Melita Davis.



2 May 2019 ESOL Tutor Training. 2019 Gloria Maybury Award winner Mary Metzger at left, 2020 Gloria Maybury Award Winner Melita Davis at right.

Mary was given the award in honor of our long-time former executive director because of her deep concern for her students and utmost respect for their confidentiality. She brings not just caring, but gentleness and calm to her work with her students, which very often is what students who have previously been through a lot really need. She values her students' stories and lessons learned, learns from her students, as it should be in the collaborative tutor-student relationship, and is constantly learning herself in order to help her students.

Conversation Circles

Conversation circles are opportunities for students to practice speaking English in a supportive environment. Production practice is key to developing proficiency in a language. Conversation circles are also a way for us to serve students who are on our waiting list. We finished a conversation circle at the Fitchburg Public Library in July and August, and then began facilitating a conversation circle in January at the Leominster Public Library. Our conversation circle shifted to talking through WhatsApp starting in the middle of March. We had seven participants in each conversation circle.

Citizenship course and study group

Twenty students prepared for the challenging citizenship interview and civics test through our fall citizenship class, taught by Eladia Romero, and seven students prepared through our winter study group, led by Frances Nolivos and Ron Honesty. The winter study group was a new program intended to fill the gap between fall and spring courses. We were not able to hold a spring course this year. In 2018-2019 we had 24 students over the fall and spring courses.



3 Citizenship class, Fall 2019

Volunteer Information Sessions

In July 2019 we started off with the goal of serving 60 students in our tutoring program, which meant training more tutors. We held Volunteer Information Sessions in September, January, and the beginning of March, at the libraries in Fitchburg and Gardner, which were attended by twenty-two people who came to find out more about the organization and volunteering. We were making very good progress towards increasing our organizational capacity. Once the online tutor training is in place, we will offer online Volunteer Information Sessions. In 2018-2019, we had one volunteer information session with five attendees.

Giftwrapping



4 Volunteer Betty Berry in action at Barnes & Noble giftwrapping

In December, staff, board members, tutors, students, and volunteers raised \$1,200 wrapping gifts at Barnes & Noble over seven days in December, donating an additional 170 hours to the organization.

Tutor Training and Tutoring

We held two English for Speakers of Other Languages Tutor Trainings in October at the Fitchburg Public Library and in February at the Heywood Memorial Library in Gardner.



5 ESOL Tutor Training, Fitchburg, October 2019



6 ESOL Tutor Training, Gardner, February 2020

We were able to complete a fall and winter ESOL tutor training, but were forced to cancel both a Basic Literacy and ESOL tutor training in the spring and summer. Our February cohort of tutors had the challenge of just starting to work with their students when we had to switch to working remotely.

In May and June we were actually able to establish a few remote tutor-student matches. We are very proud of the tutors and students who have learned to use new tools or old tools in new ways to continue to work remotely together. We look forward to the new online tutor training that Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts is developing and being able to train tutors online and pair them with students who are able to work online with them. For both tutors and students, that will create more flexibility.

- Three tutors went through training to administer the BestPlus and MAPT assessments.
- We trained 14 new tutors through our two trainings. In 2018-2019 we had two tutor trainings also and trained 14 tutors.
- We had 37 tutors and 45 students in our tutoring program. In 2018-2019 we had 38 tutors and 47 students.

Tutor & Student Support

We invested this year in online resources for the tutors and students. We were able to get licenses for the Cell-Ed app to offer to our students, and licenses for the Oxford Picture Dictionary Teacher Resource Center and ESL Library, as well as continuing our subscription to the online version of News For You. We worked one-on-one with tutors who were bravely learning to use new means like Zoom, GoogleMeet, and Skype to connect with their students.

IMPACT

“Literacy Volunteers gave me the confidence to try.” - Student Edwin

Some impacts are difficult to quantify. One thing we keep hearing from our students about our tutors is that they are kind. Kindness is a valuable renewable resource that is often in short supply, but that makes a tremendous difference, especially in difficult times.

Student Successes

- Both citizenship and tutored students became citizens this past year: Eriny, Emad, Mary, and Maria, among others, all became citizens
- Edwin passed his corrections officer test and has started a criminal justice program at a community college
- Miregul and Clarisse completed training and got jobs as medical and nursing assistants
- David started a radio program and is a step closer to returning to his field of radio producing
- Students self-report improved comprehension and confidence (annual post-assessment in May and June was suspended per Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)

By the numbers

- Our tutors reported 1,054 hours of tutoring from July 2019-June 2020. In 2018-2019 they reported 1,376 hours
- We served 82 students through our tutoring, citizenship, and conversation programs. In 2018-2019 we served 78
- Our students live in 9 different towns in the Montachusett area
- Fifty-two percent of our tutored students have school-age children

SUPPORT

We are supported by grants and donations, with one of our major fundraisers being giftwrapping at Barnes & Noble in December. We also participated in Giving Tuesday for the first time and had an excellent response to our spring appeal. An organizational development grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts enabled the board to work with a consultant to develop their fundraising skills. We received a Payroll Protection Program loan in May. Our grant from United Way of North Central Massachusetts continued to be stepped down, but individuals supported us through their workplace United Way campaigns.

Supporters

Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts / Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

United Way of North Central Massachusetts
Fitchburg Public Library

Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Rotary Club of Fitchburg

Rollstone Charitable Foundation

Hometown Bank Community Foundation

North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

Barnes & Noble - Leominster

LVMont Board of Directors

Over 40 individual donors

2019-2020 Budget

DESCRIPTION	2019-2020	2018-2019
Income Sources		
Government Grants	21,329	20,228
Foundation and Corporate Grants	15,167	13,222
Corporate Contributions	1,773	978
Individual Contributions	3,702	344
Board Contributions	919	803
Giftwrapping	1,263	1,220
Total Income Before In-kind Donation	44,154	36,795
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library)	(estimated) 9,000	(estimated) 9,000
Total Income After In-kind Donation	53,154	45,795
Expenses		
Personnel	27,291	20,698
Contract services	6,754	1,950
Operations	7,472	5,672
Total Expenses Before In-kind Donation	41,517	28,320
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library)	(estimated) 9,000	(estimated) 9,000
Total Expenses After In-kind Donation	50,517	37,320

2020 GLORIA MAYBURY AWARD

Each year a tutor is recognized for their service with the Gloria Maybury Award, named for our former long-time executive director, Gloria Maybury. Gloria was known for her involvement in the community, kindness, and generosity. The award recognizes tutors for their commitment, dedication, caring, and respect for the students and the LVMont community.



7 Gloria Maybury at 2016 LVMont Annual Meeting and 2020 Gloria Maybury Award winner, Melita Davis

This year's Gloria Maybury Award recipient is Melita Davis. Melita is not from around here. When you hear her speak, you'll hear that she's from Revere. She moved to Fitchburg to be near her daughter and grandchildren. She immediately became involved in the community through the Fitchburg Public Library, becoming involved in the Friends of the Fitchburg Public Library and finding Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area. A long-time educator, Melita trained with us in the May 2019 ESOL tutor training at the Leominster Public Library. She and her student, Jun, have been able to make the shift to working remotely. Jun describes Melita as smart and patient, and says that she learns things that aren't in textbooks, and learns American culture. Jun voted for the first time this year, so they discussed American elections. Melita says that it is a pleasure to work with Jun.

BOARD & STAFF

The board's committees worked very hard to plan our International Potluck and Annual Meeting in September 2019, a Giving Tuesday appeal for the first time, and a spring appeal for the first time in a long time, raising \$8,453 in 2019-2020. In 2018-2019 we raised \$2,347. The board has been developing our response to the coronavirus pandemic. The board has developed their giving and social media skills through their work with consultant Sarah Lange, and look forward to working on an adaptive planning project with her in 2020-2021, our organizational development committee is beginning a board recruitment drive, and our fundraising and marketing committee is re-developing our web site.

2019-2020 Board of Directors

	Expiration of Term
Joe Stiso, President	2021
Jean Couture, Treasurer	2022
Roni Beal, Co-Secretary	2021
Lucille Cormier, Co-Secretary	2021
Troy Bailey	2021
Sharon Bernard	2022
Kelly Calamari	2021
Abbie MacCallum	2022
Eladia Romero	2022
Maria Ulloa-Hancock	2021
Anne Zarrella	2022

Amy West, ex officio, Program Coordinator