



# LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTACHUSETT AREA



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2022**

# 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

Changes and more changes were the orders of the day for FY2022. Emerging from pandemic conditions that ended in person tutoring and tutor training, LVMont quickly picked up its stride. Our tutors and students began to meet in person once again, and visitors and future students were welcomed into our office at the Fitchburg Public Library. There was hope that the need to isolate would be over once and for all. Some of the pandemic adaptations did continue, e.g., tutor training sessions continued to be offered online while many tutor-student pairs who had become adept at meeting electronically chose to continue for safety and convenience. Sadly, we had lost several tutors and students due to illness and the lack of ability to meet electronically. The pandemic had left us with a reduced number of tutor-student pairs, but the organization was intact and more than ready to grow back to its pre-pandemic level of service. Recruiting new tutors and staying in touch with the students on the pre-pandemic waiting list were the top priorities.

The end of 2021-2022 brought changes in staff and board membership. Most notably, our well-loved program coordinator, Amy West, after taking us through the pandemic years, left on June 30, 2022 to pursue other career goals. A new executive director, Zwanieke Visser, was hired on 7-25-2022 and has brought with her a fresh approach to literacy programming along with an abundance of energy and enthusiasm. The Board of Directors also saw departures and arrivals. Board president, Joseph Stiso left in August of 2021 and

Vice-president, Lucille Cormier, assumed leadership. Also in August, Anne Ndunda, Finance Director/Comptroller at Work, Community Independence joined the Board as its new treasurer. Soon after, Girija Verma, a former tutor and project manager; Luisa Rodriguez, family outreach coordinator for the Fitchburg Public schools; and Anaili Hernandez, of Miles Funeral Services joined Laura Beauregard, Kelly Calamari, and Troy Bailey to form a strong new Board. At the end of June, 2022 veteran tutor and Board secretary, Roni Beal retired as did Board president, Lucille Cormier. Laura Beauregard was elected to lead the Board. Girija Verma was elected vice-president, Kelly Calamari, secretary, and Anne Ndunda continued as treasurer. Our corporate and private donors continued to support us through the Giving Tuesday 2021 and Spring Appeal 2022 fund drives. We are most grateful to all of them.

It was a year of challenges and changes and a year of successes - a good prelude to the successes of FY2023.

**Lucille Cormier**  
**President**  
**Board of Directors**

## **From the Program Coordinator**

Fiscal year 2021-2022 (July 2021-June 2022) was a year of recovering and rebuilding. We are not yet post-pandemic, and will likely never be post-COVID, and so in our recovery and rebuilding we incorporate changes that were forced upon us, but had good side effects. Virtual and online options will be a permanent part of our toolbox, whether it's Zoom, WhatsApp, or Google Jamboards. We have added new partnerships to the ones that we had before and that kept us going through the shutdowns. We return to living, but living with COVID.

## **Looking Ahead**

LVMont will be facing some transitions in the coming year. I graduated from my graduate program in May 2021 and am stepping down from my position in order to teach. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served LVMont's board, tutors, students, and community. I have learned a tremendous amount. The board has begun to plan for the organization's transition from being staffed by a program coordinator to being staffed by an executive director. The City of Fitchburg will be able to begin the renovations of the public library, where we are

located, which is a great and good thing for the community, but will necessitate navigating a move for LVMont. Through both of these transitions, our larger community of board members, tutors, students, and our community partners will see each other through.

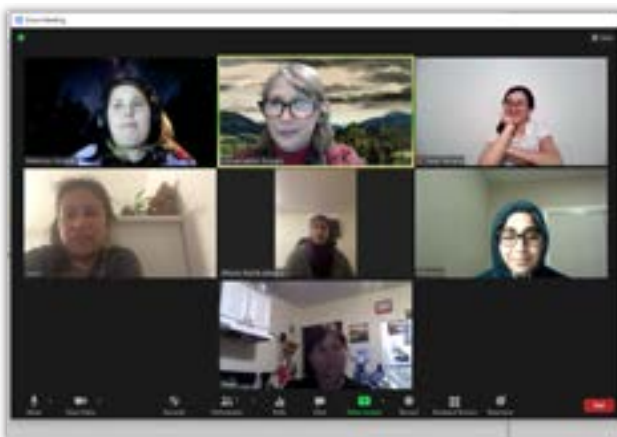
**Amy West**  
**Program Coordinator**  
**June, 2022**

# PROGRAMS

We returned to having citizenship classes, conversation groups, volunteer information sessions, and tutor trainings. We began to rebuild our program through collaboration, cooperation, and partnership with our sister Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts affiliates, community partners, and other programs.

## Conversation Groups

Conversation groups are opportunities for students to practice speaking English in a supportive environment. Production practice is key to developing proficiency in a language. Conversation groups are also a way for us to serve students who are on our waiting list, who can't commit to tutoring, or to supplement tutoring. Before the pandemic we held them in person. Early in the pandemic, we shifted to holding them on WhatsApp. In Winter (January) 2021 we started holding conversation groups online via Zoom. In Spring 2021 we began to coordinate with the Fitchburg Public Schools' parents' ESL classes in order to offer our conversation groups as a complement to the classes. Since June 2021 we've served 69 students in our conversation groups. In Spring 2022 we resumed an in-person conversation class at the Leominster Public Library, led by Maria Ulloa-Hancock. We had a number of volunteers helping with the online conversation groups: MWCC intern Rebecca Cormier, volunteer Sara Tamara-Giraldo, tutors Sergio Gomez, Jane Kalfuss Maine, and Cathy Zayka. Our conversation groups were supported by a DCU for Kids grant.



## Citizenship courses

Our citizenship courses prepare students to pass the Naturalization Interview, and Reading, Writing, and Civics Tests in order to gain US citizenship. The Naturalization Interview is where a USCIS officer informally assesses an applicant's Listening & Speaking abilities and is based on the 20-page Naturalization application. We had no citizenship programs from March 2020 to July 2021. We partnered with St. Mark's Community Education Program (SMCEP) in spring 2021 to re-develop our citizenship curriculum and develop more citizenship instructors. We now use St. Mark's citizenship curriculum and have three citizenship instructors: Ron Honesty, Maria Barrios, and Sharon McCullah. We organized a Naturalization 101 webinar in July 2021 with USCIS, SMCEP, and Project Citizenship. We held an online citizenship class jointly with SMCEP in July & August 2021 with 13 students from 11 different cities and towns. We collaborated with the Fitchburg Public Library on a grant to develop the library's citizenship corner and host a citizenship class. Our first in-person citizenship class since March 2020 was held in October and November 2021 at the Fitchburg Public Library with 7 students. Our spring 2022 citizenship class at the Leominster Public Library had 10 students. In both of those classes we were able to provide students with supplemental *Citizenship: Passing the Test* textbooks thanks to grants from the American Dream Literacy Initiative (through the Fitchburg Public Library) and the Berkshire Bank Foundation.



## Volunteer Information Sessions

Volunteer Information Sessions are a key means of recruiting tutors and board members, and hence increasing our organizational capacity. We had no Volunteer Information Sessions between January 2020 and January 2021. Our first online Volunteer Information Session was January 2021, with 8 attendees. We held online sessions also in May and September 2021 and January 2022. We returned to also having in-person sessions in March and May 2022, in Fitchburg and Leominster respectively. We had a total of 29 attendees over all the sessions from January 2021 to May 2022.

## Tutor Training and Tutoring

We offer two different 16-hour tutor trainings in order to prepare our volunteers for either Basic Literacy or ESOL tutoring. We had no tutor trainings from March 2020 to March 2021. In March 2021 we co-hosted our first online tutor training with our Worcester affiliate. We continued to collaborate with the Worcester, Lowell and other LVM affiliates through 2021 and 2022. We had online ESOL tutor trainings In March, June, and Oct. 2021, and Feb. 2022. We had our first in person ESOL tutor training since 2020 in June 2022. Through the trainings we co-hosted, and by sending trainees to trainings hosted by other affiliates, we trained 19 tutors from July 2021-June 2022. The trainings that we hosted were supported by a Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts Educational Access grant.



# IMPACT

*"I feel like nobody can stop me now." - Student Rasha*

We like to quantify impact: number of students, number of tutoring hours, progress made according to a standardized assessment like the BESTPlus, but there are also qualitative measures of our impact. Our tutors and students contribute to their communities in multiple ways.

## Student Successes

- Increased comprehension, comprehensibility, confidence, and independence
- New citizens: Hamed, Amira, Beena, Jose, Jessica, Daniela
- Juan passed the English, civics, and reading and writing citizenship tests
- Edwin achieved his goal of becoming a corrections officer
- Sydney got her high school equivalency, started community college classes, and got a job at a non-profit helping others
- Simone started adult education and medical translation classes
- Rasha got a job at Market Basket and started using public transportation
- Jun is working as a pre-school teacher and taking college classes

## By the numbers

- In March 2020 we had 39 tutor-student pairs in our tutoring program. We had had 123 tutoring hours in January 2020. In February 2021 we had 15 tutor-student pairs and 34 tutoring hours. In May 2022 we had 29 tutor-student pairs and 133 tutoring hours.
- In 2019-2020 tutors reported 1,054 tutoring hours. In 2020-2021 they reported 563. From July 2021-May 2022 they've reported a combined total of 909 virtual and in-person tutoring hours.
- We served students from 12 different towns
- Sixty-five percent of our students have school-age children

age when I started with your program I wasn't able to understand the cashier at McDonald's who was saying, 'Hi, how are you doing?'

After five years of hard work, I earned my associate's degree and got a full-time job as an x-ray technologist and am still learning from my tutor.

Thank you for every person who took off time to help out people he/she doesn't know.

I'm so grateful to have a tutor in my life." - Amira



# SUPPORT

We are supported by grants and donations. Our tutoring program is supported by grants from DESE (distributed to us through LVM) and the United Way of North Central Massachusetts. Our board developed their fundraising and planning skills thanks to an organizational development grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. We collaborated with the Fitchburg Public Library on an American Dream Literacy Initiative grant. We had some new grantors and funders this year. Our board's fundraising committee continues to take the lead in our annual spring and Giving Tuesday appeals.

## 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

Rollstone Bank & Trust

DCU for Kids

Berkshire Bank Foundation

IC Federal Credit Union

Workers Credit Union

LVMont Board of Directors

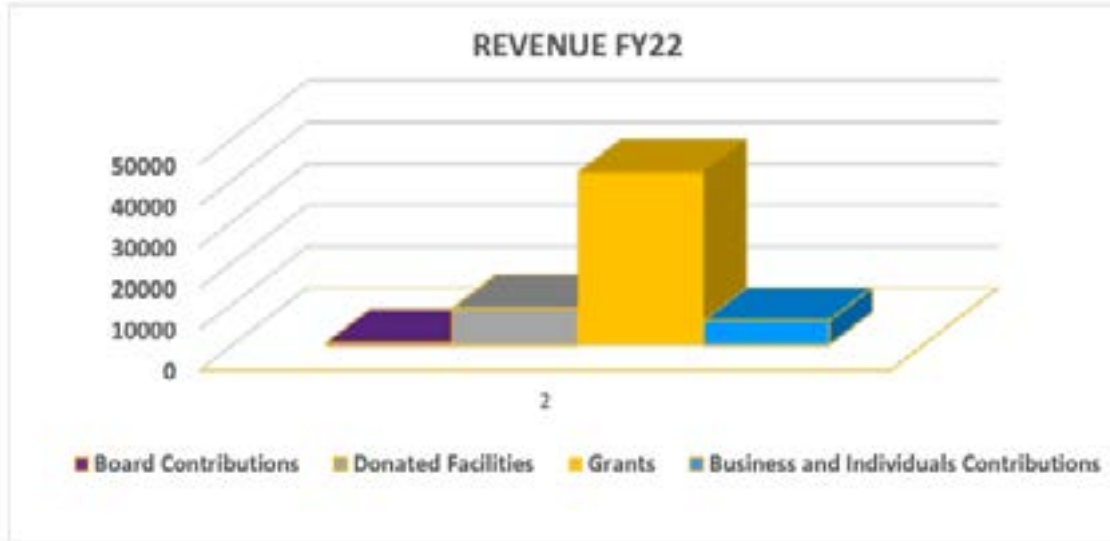
Over 40 individual donors

## 2021-2022 Budget

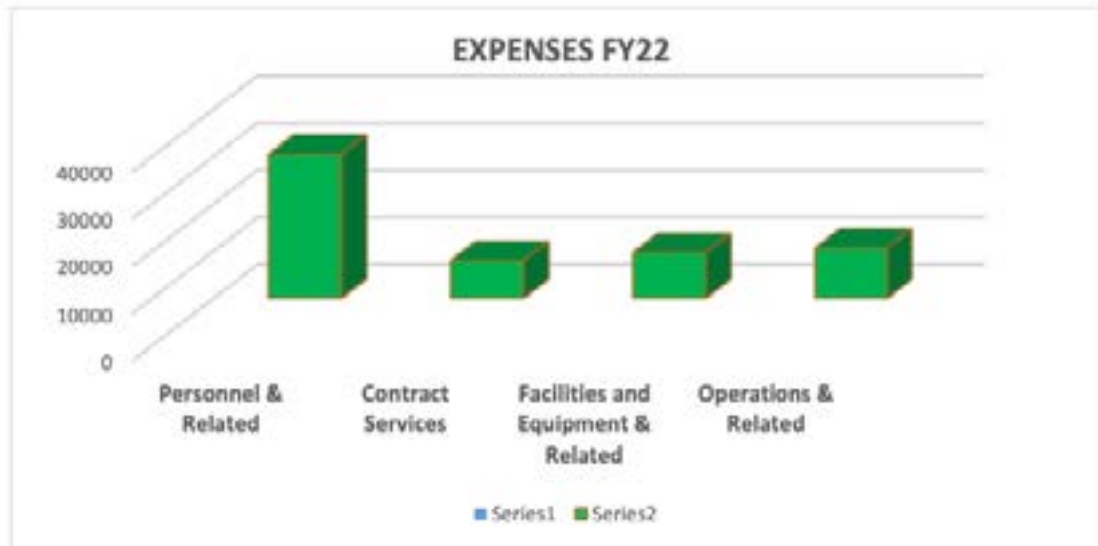
DESCRIPTION	2021-2022	2020-2021
<b>Income Sources</b>		
Board Contributions	651.18	702.27
Business and Individual Contributions	5,984.89	5,650.59
Grants	41,922.07	47,383.67
<b>Total Income Before In-kind Donation</b>	<b>48,558.14</b>	<b>53,736.53</b>
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library)	(estimated) 9,000	(estimated) 9,000
<b>Total Income After In-kind Donation</b>	<b>57,558.14</b>	<b>62,736.53</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Personnel & Related	30,430.72	29,934.70
Contract services	7,952.78	8,708.15
Facilities and Equipment & Related	9,636.53	8,964.65
Operations & Related	10,626.09	11,006.06
<b>Total Expenses Before In-kind Donation</b>	<b>\$49,009.59</b>	<b>\$49,693.85</b>
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library)	(estimated) 9,000	(estimated) 9,000
<b>Total Expenses After In-kind Donation</b>	<b>\$58,009.59</b>	<b>\$58,693.85</b>

## LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTACHUSETT AREA

### REVENUE FY 2022



### EXPENSES FY 2022



# BOARD & STAFF

The board's committees continued to work hard to strengthen our organization. The marketing committee spearheaded re-developing our web site, which is now maintained for us by Sitka Designs. The marketing committee also was able to take advantage of some tabling opportunities to promote our organization in the community. The organizational development committee has taken the lead in recruiting board members who reflect our community and planning the organization's transition from being staffed by a program coordinator to an executive director, which more accurately reflects the organization's needs.

## 2021-2022 Board of Directors

	Expiration of Term
Lucille Cormier, President	2022
Anne Ndunda, Treasurer	2024
Roni Beal, Co-Secretary	2022
Laura Beauregard, Co-Secretary	2023
Troy Bailey	2022
Kelly Calamari	2022
Luisa Fernandez	2024
Anaili Hernandez	2024
Girija Verma	2024

Amy West, ex officio, Program Coordinator

Thank you to past board members Joe Stiso, Sharon Bernard, and Carolyn Luescher.