



# LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTACHUSETT AREA



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2024**

# OUR YEAR, OUR COMMUNITY

## Mission

Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area (LVMont) is about bringing people together to make a real difference in our communities. LVMont promotes literacy in the Montachusett area by providing free, confidential and individualized tutoring to adults in basic literacy, and English to speakers of other languages. With improved literacy skills and the confidence that comes with them, adults are able to pursue a better life and future for themselves, their families and communities.



## From the President

The FY24 for the board of Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett area has been a successful year with accomplishments along with several board changes. At a time of political, global, and financial vulnerability, Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area experienced a successful year of significant growth. LVMont's executive director, tutors, and the board of directors have worked tirelessly to ensure that adults in need of literacy services have access to quality services that will improve their lives and the lives of their families. Literacy is the first step to supporting social justice issues our country faces. Our executive director, tutors, donors, and board of directors continue their march for social justice through literacy right here in our local communities.

Now that the pandemic era is a distant memory, the board of directors major accomplishment this year was to partner with the executive director in bringing back the annual scabble fundraising event. The board contributed their time, finances, and energy to ensure a successful event. It was a joy to see both children and adults engaged in a wholesome, educational, and fun activity to support such a worthy organization. The board looks forward to continuing this annual fundraising event and engaging even more community members. In addition to the scrabble event, our corporate and private donors continued to support us through Giving Tuesday 2023 and other fundraising drives. We are most grateful to all of them.

During FY24, the board of directors saw departures and arrivals. We saw our first departures at the end of 2023, Luisa Rodriguez, family outreach coordinator for the Fitchburg Public schools; and Anaili Hernandez, of Miles Funeral Services respectfully left the board. Soon after these departures, Denise Levesque, ESL teacher at Nashoba Reginal High School, and Noelle Byrnes, attorney at Byrnes Law, joined the board of directors at the beginning of the fiscal year 2024. We also saw the arrival of Derek Hubbard, senior VP of sales with Ginsey Home Solutions, and Jennifer Cipolla, instructional coach of language acquisition at Hudson public schools. At the close of FY24, secretary, Kelly Calamari, served her board term and has gone on to provide tutor training services with LVMont. We also had Anne Ndunda, treasurer, complete her term of service. We thank all our departed directors for their service. During the spring of 2024, the board was fortunate to have another new director join the board, Linda Carmicheal, senior VP of Operations at Fidelity Co-Operative Bank. Linda is serving as treasurer, and Denise is serving as Secretary alongside vice-president, Girja Verma, and President, Laura Beauregard. The second accomplishment this year is that though the board experienced various changes, the board is stronger than ever with such professional and committed individuals. The future looks bright for the board of LVMont.

As we expand our efforts to support LVMont, we look forward to demanding work to ensure the program has the resources and instructional tools to serve LVMont students. Empowering LVMont will empower lives and support the march for social justice right here in our community.

We hope you will join the march.

Laura Beauregard  
President  
Board of Directors

## **From the Executive Director**

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with gratitude and admiration for the incredible community that surrounds Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area (LVMont). This year has been one of growth, celebration, and accomplishment—none of which would have been possible without the dedication of our remarkable volunteers and the determination of our students, who are committed to improving their lives and integrating more fully into their communities through language learning.

Our volunteers continue to amaze me with their passion and generosity. This year, we were thrilled to see one of our own honored with the **MCAE 2024 Outstanding Educator Award**, a testament to the hard work and impact our tutors make every day. Additionally, the establishment of the **Gardner Tutoring Circle**—a collaborative effort between LVMont and several other non-profit organizations—has already made a significant impact, serving 50 immigrants with the support of our literacy volunteers and recruited former teachers.

2024 also marked our **50th Anniversary Gala**, a milestone event celebrating five decades of fostering literacy and community. We reinstated our beloved **Scrabble Fundraising Tournament** after a 20-year hiatus, an effort that not only raised crucial funds but brought us together in a fun and meaningful way.

Our **Conversation Circles** continue to be a success, providing a welcoming space for students to practice English in real-life settings. But the true highlight of this year has been the many achievements of our amazing students, each one a powerful reminder of why we

do what we do. Their hard work, resilience, and dedication to learning are the heart of our mission.

Our **Citizenship Classes** also continue to thrive, with steady attendance and many of our students successfully achieving U.S. citizenship. It's been a privilege to witness their journeys and celebrate their milestones. On top of that, we had a **record number of instructional hours** delivered this year, further demonstrating the commitment of our volunteers and the growth of our programs.

As we look ahead to the future, we remain committed to empowering individuals and strengthening our communities through the power of literacy. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Here's to many more years of growth, achievement, and transformation.

Warm regards,

**Zwanieke Visser**

**Executive Director**

**June, 2024**

# PROGRAMS

This fiscal year we continued offering citizenship classes, conversation circles, volunteer information sessions, and tutor trainings. We expanded our conversation offerings. We collaborated with libraries and worked with our tutors to be able to offer more opportunities for our students and other community members in underserved towns to practice their English. We added 3 more conversation circles in comparison to last year while partnering with 2 libraries to set up conversation circles there as well in the new fiscal year.

## Conversation circles

Conversation circles are opportunities for students to practice speaking English in a supportive environment. Language 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, who can't commit to tutoring, or to supplement tutoring. We offered seven conversation circles this year, offering a total of 1476 instructional hours to 145 unduplicated students (3 students attended more than one circle).

We offered the following conversation circles:

- Fall conversation circle in Leominster Library run by Leanne Fisher: serving 17 students.
- Winter/Spring conversation circle in the Leominster Library run by Gretchen DiGeronimo: serving 27 students.
- Year round Read Aloud circles run by Jim Canning: serving 10 students.
- Summer conversation circle in Lunenburg Public Library run by Maria Barios and Sharon McMullah, serving 8 students.
- Conversation Circles run by multiple tutors in Gardner, serving 50 students.
- Winter/spring conversation circle in Fitchburg Public Library run by BettyAnn Cirillo, serving 19 students.
- Conversation circle in Fitchburg City Hall run by Kelly Boudreau, serving 17 students.

Our conversation circles were supported by a grant from DESE as well as from BEMIS.

## 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 partnered with St. Mark's Community Education Program (SMCEP). We use St. Mark's citizenship curriculum. They send us updated materials and train our instructors on any updated materials. We have four citizenship instructors: Ron Honesty, Maria Barrios, Sharon McCullah and Karen Fusco. Our fall 2023 citizenship class at the Leominster Public Library had 9 students who received a combined total of 152 instructional hours. The spring 2024 classes were attended by 15 students for a combined total of 236 instructional hours. The students were given a binder with all the materials needed, thanks to a community support grant from the Fitchburg Rotary Club and the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.

A total of 20 unduplicated students (4 students attended both courses) received a combined number of 388 instructional hours in our citizenship classes. Seven students received citizenship this year.



## Volunteer Information Sessions

Volunteer Information Sessions play a vital role in recruiting new tutors, board members, and expanding our organizational capacity. This fiscal year, we held **six Volunteer Information Sessions**, which resulted in **18 tutor applications**—a strong pipeline of dedicated individuals eager to make a difference in our ESOL and basic literacy programs.

The primary goal of these sessions is to introduce potential volunteers to the various ways they can contribute, not just through tutoring but in other roles that support our mission. We aim to equip attendees with all the information they need to make an informed decision about whether volunteering with LVMont is the right fit for them. We host some information sessions throughout the year, but we have found most success in scheduling our sessions **two weeks or more before an upcoming tutor training**. This timing allows us to thoroughly engage with interested candidates and gives them ample time to commit to the training program.

By holding these Volunteer Information Sessions consistently and strategically, we continue to strengthen our volunteer base, which in turn enables us to reach more students and grow our impact in the community.

## Tutor Training and Tutoring

In fiscal year 2024, Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area (LVMont) remained committed to equipping our volunteers with the skills and confidence needed to be effective ESOL or BL tutors. This year, we hosted an **18-hour in-person ESOL tutor training**, providing new volunteers with essential strategies and tools for teaching English to non-native speakers. The training focused on lesson planning, the communicative approach in teaching English, understanding language acquisition, and fostering supportive learning environments—ensuring that each tutor was well-prepared to make a meaningful impact on their students' language learning journeys.

We were proud to have received support for this training through a generous grant from the **Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts Educational Access** program. This



funding allowed us to offer high-quality training. The hands-on sessions, role-playing activities, and group discussions created an interactive and collaborative learning environment that prepared our volunteers to meet the diverse needs of their students.

In addition to the training we hosted, **other affiliates** across the state provided training for six additional volunteers through **three separate online trainings**. These partnerships highlight the collaborative spirit within the Literacy Volunteer of Massachusetts (LVM) network. The shared resources and expertise from LVM and affiliate organizations is invaluable in our efforts address the growing demand for ESOL instruction in our region.

Thanks to the dedication of our trainers and the enthusiasm of our new volunteers, 2024 saw the successful preparation of a committed group of individuals who are now actively tutoring and making a real difference in the lives of their students. As we continue to expand our programs, tutor training remains a cornerstone of our mission, ensuring that every student receives the individualized support they need to succeed.



# IMPACT

*“Thanks to my tutor I improved my confidence when expressing myself and to communicate correctly.” - Student Daniela*

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.

**Statewide student award:** One of our volunteers received the 2024 Outstanding Student Award from the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education, the adult education professional organization in the state. The MCAE Outstanding Educator Award is presented annually to an **ABE teacher, counselor, administrator, or volunteer** who has improved the life situation(s) of learners/colleagues as a result of the learning/teaching experience; demonstrated leadership within the teaching/learning/counseling/ administrative environment; met significant challenges in an effective way; been supportive of others engaged in teaching or learning in the field of adult education; and demonstrated achievements which show selfless dedication, service and commitment to the principles of adult and continuing education.

## Student successes

- Rose started a job at a hospital as an aide
- Vivi 's day care business is expanding.
- Rosa is reading passages and performing solo at church. She is also participating in bible reading discussions.
- Suzan is taking an English class for college credit at MWCC. She works at McDonald's, substitutes at a school cafeteria, is raising 3 small children, and, even when she can't meet with her tutor at the library, continues to work hard on her literacy.
- Nina registered for MWCC to get a degree.

- Beatriz said that she is now starting to read and speak in “English” without translating words into Spanish first.
- Beatriz received a promotion at work.
- A student from the Gardner circle has been really prioritizing learning English. had a job interview and told the employer, "I can't work in the morning because I can't miss my English class or my teachers
- Six women from the Gardner circle attended their first training session to become licensed childcare providers.
- Dieubon has been excepted to Fitchburg State University for a master’s degree, he also published a book.
- Rosa (a BL student) has participated in the Leominster Library's Winter Reading contest. And after reading one of the books, she made a list of words she wants to use and is doing creative writing.
- Rose's friend says she is speaking English with family and friends since she gets English tutoring.
- Marianna is speaking more and is beginning sentences with the word ‘me’ a lot less.
- Rasha got her driver’s license.
- Suzan found a job at McDonalds and Chery found a job as NSA.
- Raquelle voted for the first time in the USA.

## **By the numbers**

- We served a total of 176 students.
- In the year FY2024 52 volunteers have contributed to the success of LVMont’s program: 40 active tutors (including assessors and class instructors), and 12 general support volunteers.
- Our tutors reported 1690 tutoring hours in FY24.
- We served students from 9 different towns.

With our classes I’ve been able to improve my confidence when expressing myself and to communicate correctly.  
 My tutor has always been very kind and helpful to make our classes dynamic and has always supported me to improve my English language skills, both with reading and history activities and conversations to practice my pronunciation. I greatly appreciate his mentorship and support during this time and wish that more people receive the same support from this program. - Daniela

# SUPPORT

We are supported by grants and donations. Our tutoring program is supported by grants from DESE (distributed to us through LVM), the United Way of North Central Massachusetts, the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, Heath alliance Clinton Hospital, BEMIS (distributed to us through CFNCM) and the Agnes M. Lindsay Trust.

We have received Community Support donations from Rollstone Bank, Leominster Credit Union, Mainstreet Bank and Walmart.

Our board's fundraising committee continues to take the lead in our annual Giving Tuesday appeal and fundraising events.

## Supporters

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

United Way of North Central Massachusetts

Fitchburg Public Library

Fitchburg City

Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts

Agnes M. Lindsay Trust

Health Alliance Clinton Hospital

BEMIS

Walmart

Mainstreet Bank

Leominster Credit Union

Workers Credit Union

Rollstone Bank

LVMont Board of Directors

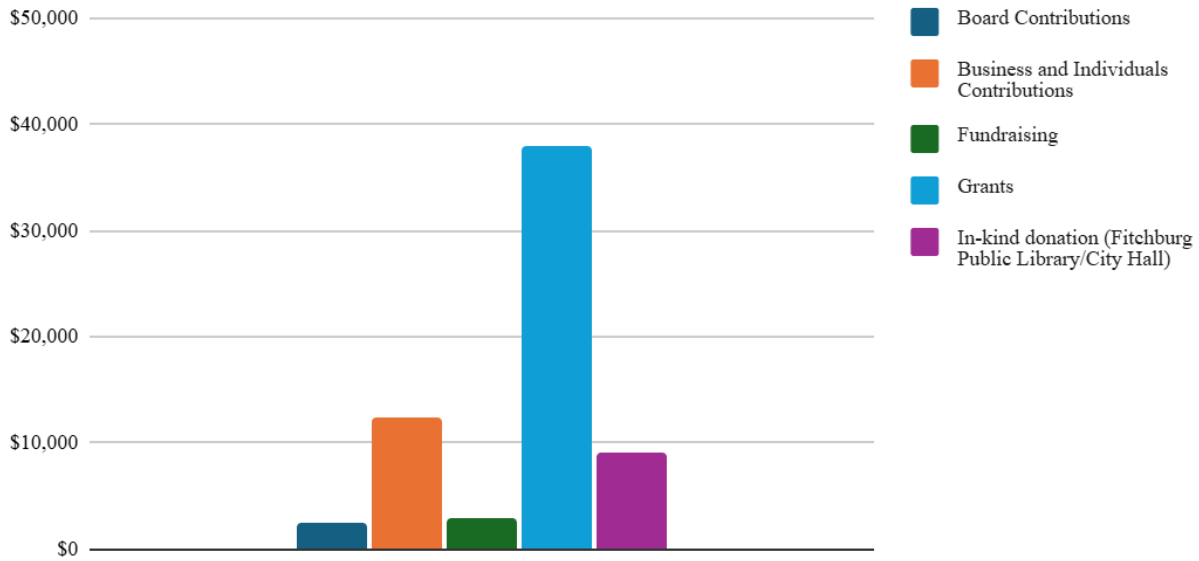
Over 40 individual donors

## 2023-2024 Budget

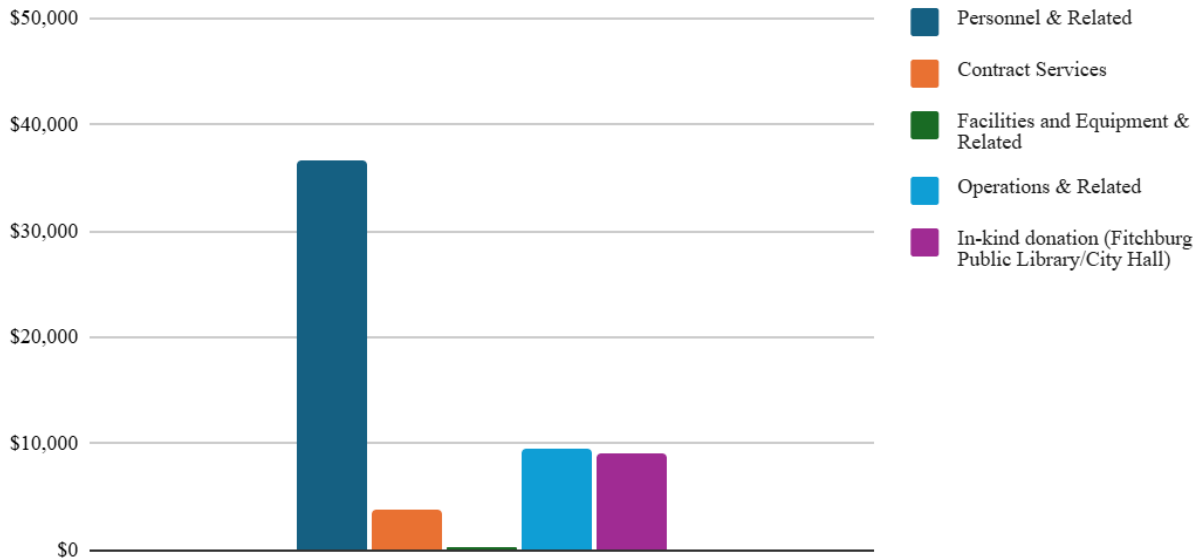
FINANCIAL REPORT		
REVENUE	2023-2024	2022-2023
<b>Income Sources</b>		
Board Contributions	\$ 2,442.52	\$ 1,765.00
Business and Individuals Contributions	\$ 12,276.47	\$ 11,918.21
Fundraising	\$ 2,925.60	\$ 1,157.62
Grants	\$ 37,874.01	\$ 45,741.62
<b>Total Income Before In-kind Donation</b>	<b>\$ 55,518.60</b>	<b>\$ 60,582.45</b>
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library/City Hall)	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
<b>Total Income After In-Kind Donation</b>	<b>\$ 64,518.60</b>	<b>\$ 69,582.45</b>

FINANCIAL REPORT		
EXPENSES	2023-2024	2022-2023
Personnel & Related	\$ 36,738.81	\$ 27,192.03
Contract Services	\$ 3,760.07	\$ 4,639.49
Facilities and Equipment & Related	\$ 250.00	\$ 50.00
Operations & Related	\$ 9,551.33	\$ 8,724.39
<b>Total Expenses Before Donated Space</b>	<b>\$ 50,300.21</b>	<b>\$ 40,605.91</b>
In-kind donation (Fitchburg Public Library/City Hall)	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
<b>Total Expenses After Donated Space</b>	<b>\$ 59,300.21</b>	<b>\$ 49,605.91</b>
<b>Net Income or Loss</b>	<b>\$ 5,218.39</b>	<b>\$ 19,976.54</b>

### Revenue - FY 2024



### Expenses - FY 2024



# BOARD & STAFF

The board's committees continued to work hard to strengthen our organization. The fundraising committee spearheaded our annual appeals and annual Scrabble Tournament Fundraiser. The governance committee continues to take the lead in recruiting board members who reflect our community.

## 2023-2024 Board of Directors

	Expiration of Term
Laura Beauregard, President	2025
Girija Verma, Vice-President	2025
Anne Ndunda, Treasurer	2025
Kelly Calamari, Secretary	2024
Noelle Byrnes	2026
Denise Levesque	2026
Derek Hubberd	2026
Jennifer Cipollo	2026

Zwanieke Visser, Executive Director.

Thank you to past board members Luisa Fernandez, Carolyn Hughes, Anaili Hernandez.