



Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County



**Literacy
Changes
Lives**

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*Serving the people of
Englewood, Laurel,
Nokomis, North Port,
Osprey and Venice*

February, 2009



Ioana Negoescu and tutor Priscilla Miranda

From Bucharest to Venice

On April 15, 2008, Ioana Negoescu arrived in Venice, Florida to be with her fiancé, Emil, and her future mother-in-law, Ema. Her black cat, Pufa, joined her several months later. Ioana has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Bucharest, Romania, where she worked in her local City Hall.

Ioana's first literacy class was held at the Venice Public Library on May 15. Her tutor, Priscilla Miranda, a former high school English teacher, was very impressed with Ioana's basic knowledge of English since Ioana was completely self-taught. Her determination and desire to speak "like an American" have been evident throughout their twice-weekly one-hour classes.

Initially, Ioana struggled to put words into complete sentences, but now she engages in conversation with great enthusiasm. Her studies have alternated from textbook exercises with a concentration on "Grammar Essentials," conversation role-playing, and use of the Rosetta Stone English language computer software program. She also recently began to study for her Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a college requirement, because her goal is to obtain a degree in Medical Administration.

She is constantly looking for opportunities to improve her English by doing volunteer work in order to surround herself with English-speaking people. She is hopeful that she soon will be able to do volunteer work for the Venice Theatre.

Ioana is very grateful for the opportunity to learn English through the Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota's free, one-on-one program. This program has changed her life! — Priscilla Miranda

Gentle Reminder

Don't forget to report your tutor and volunteer hours (including travel time) every two months. If you skipped a past report, please send it too because it's very important that everyone's hours be included in our reports to United Way and foundations. If you need reporting forms, call 488-8994.

Volunteer Opportunity in North Port

Do you like working with computers? Do you like the challenge of learning something new? Do you like to share your knowledge with others? You may be the volunteer we're looking for to learn the ELLIS software which teaches English as a Second Language. The software is installed on two LVSSC computers in the North Port Library. There are step-by-step instructions to get you started. You'll be the "Coach" that helps tutors and students learn to use the software. Call Sandy McIntyre, 412-0107, to volunteer.

President's Corner

Please write three important dates on your calendar:

Saturday, February 28 – United Way 3rd

Annual Walk-A-Thon in Venice

Thursday, March 19 – “Deal Me In” for Literacy card party to benefit LVSSC

Tuesday, April 14 – Celebrate Literacy

Appreciation Luncheon 12:00 – 2:00 PM

The Walk-A-Thon is to raise money for your favorite non-profit and help all the United Way agencies in South Sarasota County as well. To donate, write a check payable to United Way of South Sarasota County and sent it to the LVSSC office. One half of the donation will benefit Literacy Volunteers directly. The other half benefits all the United Way agencies. There will be music and food. It's fun to participate, and I hope you will join us. Call Priscilla Miranda, 488-3949, for more details.

If you don't attend the “Deal Me In” for Literacy Card and Game Party, you'll be missing a fun afternoon. Please call and reserve a table. Details are on the enclosed flyer. Aston Gardens donates a nice room and generous, delicious refreshments. New this year will be a “Teacup Auction” in which you buy tickets and chose which prizes you would like to win. Please tell your card and game playing friends about this opportunity to have a great time and benefit Literacy Volunteers.

The April 14 Celebrate Literacy Appreciation Luncheon information will be sent to you in the mail in March. I hope you will plan to attend.

---Sandy McIntyre



On November 6, 2008, John Gallas passed away after a short, brave struggle with lung cancer. John was one of the newer literacy volunteers in North Port. He was instrumental in getting the ELLIS program and other computer programs in use by students at the North Port Library. Being a retired teacher/guidance counselor/school administrator gave him the eagerness to work with students of all levels. Last season John expanded his role by working with students at Manatee Community College which he found very satisfying and challenging. Upon returning to North Port this season, he was ready to take on the challenge of teaching a well needed Citizenship class in North Port. John's wonderful sense of humor and willingness to encourage students to reach their potential will certainly be missed by all. Jan would like to thank everyone in the literacy group for all of their kind expressions of sympathy.

Sarasota County - Literacy

Summit 2008: The Next Chapter

Our Past President, Marybeth Catizone, represented LVSSC in collaboration with Literacy Council of Sarasota, Sarasota County School Board, and Sarasota County Libraries to organize this meeting held on Oct. 30, 2008, for networking and hearing updates on literacy initiatives. The attendees represented organizations that provide literacy services to children and adults in Sarasota and nearby counties.

We learned about recent innovations in children's literacy from Wendy Hopkins, Vice President of The Community Foundation of Sarasota County. The Community Foundation has awarded a large multi-year grant (\$674,380) for LEAF: *Literacy Empowers All Families* which includes pre-reading and reading programs for babies through eighth grade.

Sarabeth Kalajian, Director, Sarasota County Library System, described Dolly Parton's Imagination Library which sends age-appropriate books to each child in the program and encourages reading and visiting the public library.

Margie Genter, Vice President Goodwill Industries -Manasota, spoke about workplace literacy for their 450 adult employees in Manatee and Sarasota counties where half are entry-level employees with barriers to self sufficiency.

Roberta Reiss, Literacy Program Coordinator, Collier County Public Library, discussed how to structure a workplace literacy program and have willing business partners.

Ideas were shared when attendees reported on what their organizations have been doing since the 2006 Summit and their current action plans.

The Literacy Summit provided an excellent opportunity for collaborative partnerships and sharing of resources that we hope to see continue in the future.



ESL tutor-training class Nov. 10, 2008 Top row, left to right: Sid Motchan, Larry Washburn Middle row: Lenore Washburn, Betty Dowling, Kim Thompson Seated: Zelda Diner Not pictured: Sandy Yarranton

New Americans

My husband, Al, and I teach a class on Monday nights at the Venice Library. It is for intermediate speakers who want to learn more about American speech customs and functions. Over the years our students have come and gone...some because they moved away; some because they no longer felt the need for this type of instruction; some because they were only in Venice temporarily and some for various other reasons. But, there has also been a core of students from many countries around the world who continue coming to class year in and year out.. They come from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Europe, the Philippines and Africa. This group is thirsty for knowledge of American speech and communication. Over the years they have created bonds with us and with each other. I often think of them as extended family.

They love to share their customs with us, as well. Imagine how difficult it would be to leave behind everything and everyone familiar to you in your search for political, economic and personal freedoms and have to communicate in a language that you can barely understand. I found out how difficult this was first hand when some of our students invited us to visit them in Eastern Europe. While we were in Prague one of our students, who was visiting her daughter on the other side of the city, invited us to spend a day with them there. So, our hosts took us to the bus, told the driver where to let us off, and our other student met us on the other side of Prague. On the bus no one spoke English and we could not understand what they were saying. Nor could we understand the signs in the bus or the street signs. "What if the driver forgets about us?" I thought. "What if he lets us off at the wrong stop?" "What if our host is late in meeting us?" It was only then that I realized how difficult it is to be in a country where you can not speak the language.

Yes, of course the driver remembered where to let us off. Of course our hosts were there to meet us. We had a wonderful day with them, but that did not stop me from worrying about the "what ifs" on our return to the other side of Prague. It gave me a new appreciation for the difficulties our students experience in a strange new country.

Many of them have become citizens while we have been teaching them. The new citizens are eager to vote. Three of them have become citizens over the past few months but none of them in time to

register for the recent presidential election. "Next time," we tell them.

Among many other things in our class we cover idioms with them. I tell them that even if they don't use the idioms themselves, it is important that they understand them because Americans use them all the time without even realizing it. They will hear them on television and in movies and read them in the printed word. How can you explain, "Climbing the walls? Dead as a doornail? Piece of cake?" Actually, it's fun. They laugh and try to use them in sentences.

Our three newest citizens demonstrated their appreciation for idioms after their citizenship tests. I had taken the first one to Tampa for the test. She was understandably nervous before they called her name. But she went in to the testing room trembling, but brave. About twenty minutes later she emerged looking what I took to be shaken. She said that she had to have her picture taken down stairs. "So, you passed the test?" I asked. "Yes, of course I passed," she said. "*It vass piece uff cake.*" A week or two later another student went to Tampa to take the test. I called her when she returned. "How was it?" I asked. "*It vass piece uff cake.*" she said. Finally, the third one took the test two days before Christmas. The examiner put her at ease, telling her that it was almost Christmas and she would have a special Christmas gift of citizenship. When I asked her how the test itself went, she said, (you guessed it) "*It vass piece uff cake!*" -- Alice Anderson

Book News

Thanks to the Plantation Foundation, I was able to order a large shipment of wonderful books. Please stop in and take a look.

We hope to receive other book grants in the future, and I would like you to help me decide what to order. Is there is a book we don't have that you would enjoy using with your student? Even if you just know about a book that you think would benefit our program, let me know. I will keep a list so that when the time comes we can order it and add it to our library.

I hope to hear from you. Your input will help me order the books you really would like to use! -- Pat Swindler

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FIRST CLASS

Literacy Changes Lives



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An Affiliate of ProLiteracy America

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