



July 2024

To: VAASL (Tammy Hinkle)

From: Literacy Volunteers of America – Prince William
John Swirchak, Chief Executive Officer

Our History

Thirty years ago, Dona Swanson, a local area librarian, turned her calling to alleviate low adult literacy into an incorporated mission. She founded Literacy Volunteers of America – Prince William (LVA-PW), an adult literacy organization that today provides dignity, equity, and inspiration through the gift of literacy and health literacy to hundreds of adults in Prince William County, the City of Manassas, and Manassas Park, Virginia.

Overview of Operations

LVA-PW offers both in-person and on-line classes for adult students. We offer classes in Basic English (Conversation), ESL, Health Literacy, and Computer Literacy. We average, in total, about 80 classes over the year, reaching and teaching hundreds of adult students.

Since we are a community partner with the Prince William Public Libraries, most of our on-site classes are located at local area libraries. All our classes are available to students at no cost. We are the only literacy organization in Northern Virginia offering classes at no cost to students.

Conversation Class at Chinn Library



PWC Board Supervisor Angry visiting and teaching LVA-PW class at Chinn library



Partnership with the Prince William County Schools

We are a SPARK partner with the Prince William County Schools. SPARK, through its community partners, “provides programs and initiatives to PWC schools that they may not otherwise have.” As a SPARK partner, LVA-PW teaches adult students at area Title 1 schools during the school year. We currently teach nearly 100 students at eight schools weekly. There are more schools on our waiting list as this program is seeing substantial interest and growth. In fact, we hope to hire a part-time Program Coordinator for this program specifically.

LVA-PW adult learners at Triangle ES

All Smiles with the Gift of Literacy

These adult learners are parents of students attending class at Triangle Elementary School.

Last night was their last day of class for this school year and they are celebrating a year’s worth of ESL instruction including health-related lessons.

About this program

LVA-PW, as a SPARK partner of the PWC Schools, teaches adult ESL classes, weekly at many area schools in the county. We instruct nearly 100 adult learners on a weekly basis, all at no cost to our students.



LVA-PW teaching at Yorkshire ES



LVA-PW in action at Marumsco Hills ES



LVA-PW's Program Goal

Our program goal is to teach adult students how to be better communicators – *to understand and to be understood; to find their voice* in the communities in which they live. The picture below represents the five major areas that comprise LVA-PW's holistic approach to literacy.

LVA-PW's Holistic Approach to Literacy/Health Literacy

English-Language Skills

Improve their English-language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening)

Conversation

Learn to engage in day-to-day conversations with fluency and confidence

Pronunciation

Improve pronunciation, intonation, and accent reduction to communicate with more clarity

Critical Thinking

Improve the ability to organize thoughts, filter out misinformation, clearly express opinions, and support arguments

Health Literacy

Acquire a level of health literacy that helps students better understand complex health-related information and e-health (portals and telemedicine).



Our holistic approach, unique to LVA-PW, encapsulates a broader understanding of literacy that encompasses both general English-based literacy skills with complex health-related information. In short, we integrate health related topics in all our English-based language classes.

Our programs are designed to strengthen our students' educational needs and goals regardless of their level of education. Students enrolled in our programs can:

- Learn to engage in day-to-day conversations with confidence
- Improve their English-language skills (speaking, reading, writing, listening with improved comprehension),
- Improve pronunciation and intonation
- Enhance critical thinking (how to organize thoughts; filter out misinformation; clearly express their opinions; support arguments)
- Acquire a level of health literacy that helps them better understand complex health-related information; e-health (portals, e-prescription, and telemedicine).

Advanced AI technologies will help drive the future of adult ESL education

At LVA-PW, we believe it's imperative to help our students navigate through the complexities of a technology-driven world. For example, we are showing students how to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transpose complex health-related material typically written on a 12th grade level to an ESL level more in line with their educational level.

The student outcome of this AI lesson using Chat GPT has been remarkable. We not only see students learning and embracing AI, but have seen their comprehension, their understanding of a complex health issue, improve dramatically. We have also seen much improvement in their speaking and listening skills, their ability to discuss a topic concisely, and with improved fluency.

Presently, AI is used at LVA-PW to create lessons in critical thinking; lesson planning to address vaccine hesitancy; adaptive lesson planning to meet a student's individual needs; and for the design and development of pre- and post-student assessments for AI generated lessons.

The Power of Literacy

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed through literacy, society could break out of the evils of racism and create equality for people of different castes, colors and creeds.

It was Dr. King's belief and desire to alleviate low literacy in our communities. At LVA-PW, we will do what we can to bring Dr. King's vision to fruition, one person at a time.

Thank you for your support.

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