

LITERACY MATTERS

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Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

What You'll Find in this Issue:

It's (Not) All Greek To Me 2

Resource Corner 2

Happy Birthday 2

Tutor Spotlight 3

A Day Of Bridge 4

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BACK TO SCHOOL

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

As a kid, I remember being asked to write a composition essay on the first day of each year of my elementary school education. The subject was always the same: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." I never thought I'd have much use for this type of assignment in real life - until this summer.

I found out a few years ago that I would need to go back to school for my Master's degree in order to complete the mandatory pre-requisites for the Fellow level of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE). I tried to get around it, figuring that my experience running several non-profits over the past fifteen years would translate into some form of graduate-level credit, but rules are rules and I was denied. I asked what field I would have to study, and the AOGPE responded that it didn't matter, as long as I had the degree. Little did I know, this answer would be the greatest gift I've received in quite some time. I have always wanted to study writing. As a girl, I dreamed of one day becoming an author. Now, I am being given the chance to pursue a lifelong dream thanks to the Academy!

I did a ton a of research and decided to enroll in Fairfield University's MFA program because it is a low-residency model. This

means that for 9 summer days and 9 winter days, I have to report to Enders Island, an 11-acre oasis off the tip of Mystic, CT, for an intensive - which is a series of classes, seminars, and workshops with students at all levels of the program. The schedule is as described: intense. Sessions are led by a combination of faculty members and visiting authors. Being surrounded by that many published authors left me utterly starstruck and inspired, and I spent every rare free moment I had holed up in my room, writing.

I had a tremendous brush with fame on the third day that I am compelled to share with you. Wally Lamb, the author of *She's Come Undone*, *I Know This Much is True*, *We are Water*, and several other novels, came to host a craft seminar with us. This was a Q&A session where we were encouraged to ask him about his writing process. He shared many stories; specifically, he spoke about his practice of writing (*cont'd on p.3*)



Enders Island is full of beautiful brickwork, architecture, gardens, and grounds.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Summer is usually a time to relax, either at home or away on vacation. This summer, part of my vacation included time away from my family during my 9-day intensive at Enders Island. Prior to me leaving, Haley and Julie expressed concern for me. *Was I nervous?* they wondered. *Would I have to share a room with a stranger? What if I didn't like the food?* I tried to reassure them, to tell them that even though I was nervous I would be okay, and that if I had to share a room then maybe I would make a new friend, and if I didn't like the food then I could cook for myself. On the first day, they drove up with me, walked me in to registration, and helped me carry my bags to my room, taking turns holding my hand the whole time. They learned a valuable lesson during that time: New things are scary for everyone, even mommies, even leaders of companies, even tutors and teachers. There is grace and humility in the human side of being a student. And for those on the other side, a little support goes a long way.

Karen 😊



Above, my girls pose with some of their new Fairfield swag! They're so proud of their mom for going back to school!



"IT'S (NOT) ALL GREEK TO ME"

(submitted by Kim Nau)

This summer I spent almost two weeks cruising the Mediterranean visiting Greece, Malta, and Italy. It was a dream vacation with my family. While in Italy, it surprised me how much Italian I was able to read based on my prior knowledge of Spanish. Many languages are interwoven like a tapestry of words connecting different cultures.

There are many common English words (related to science and technology) that are derived from Greek: geography, grammar, architect, economy, telephone, microscope.

Usually words that begin with "ph" are of Greek origin: philosophy, physical, photo, philanthropy, etc. According to dictionary.com, 60% of the English language has Greek or Latin roots.

Let's examine the word Mediterranean. This word has two roots: medi=middle and terr=land/earth. Based on our knowledge of these roots, we can assume that the word, Mediterranean, means the sea in the middle of two lands. Let's expand it further and create a word list based on these roots: medium, mediocre, medieval, intermediate, immediate, media, median, mediator, territory, territorial, terrain, terra, terrestrial, extraterrestrial, terrier, and terrarium.

One of the important things that I have learned through my Orton-Gillingham training is that you can build vocabulary more effectively and efficiently by teaching students Latin and Greek prefixes, suffixes, and roots. It empowers students by giving them the opportunity to engage with words and analyze them. One root can generate dozens of words and it simultaneously makes them aware that language has meaning. A useful resource is the Membean website which provides root trees to help students continue to develop their vocabulary:

<http://www.membean.com/educator/wordroots>.



RESOURCE CORNER: EASY ENGLISH NEWS

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)



Elizabeth Claire's Easy English News is a monthly newspaper that is geared towards English Language Learners. It has large print, shorter sentences, easy vocabulary, and many engaging photographs. This resource will help our students build their English vocabulary and reading skills while they learn about their new environment in the United

States. Topics can vary from events and holidays in the current month, famous people in U.S. History, humor, consumer awareness, idioms and figures of speech, pronunciation guides, discussion questions, readers' true stories, etc. There are crossword puzzles and other activities to complete, with answers provided in the back. Important words are bolded and definitions are provided in a glossary at the end of the newspaper. Each issue comes with the teacher's guide and reproducible quizzes, cloze exercises, and tests, which you can also access through the website for free. If you want to check it out, visit the website (provided below) and download a free sample newspaper. There are even audio recordings that you can access online so students can follow along if they need some extra support reading the newspaper.

Feel free to stop by the office if you ever want to use this resource with your students. Literacy Nassau has a monthly subscription. Visit: www.elizabethclaire.com



Warm wishes to the following tutors born in September!

Maria Acosta – Sam Antar – Jessica Askoy – Lillian Baum
Michelle Berman – Toni Cangialosi – Lisa Chieco
Janice Collins - Carol Cook – Janice Donoghue – Rhea Epstein
Leslie Feinberg - Kelly Filippone – Nancy Friedman
Laura Garcia - Kathleen Green – Freya Grice
Elinor Haber – Donald Hayde - Jean Heinz
Susan Higney – Amy Karofsky – Cynthia Katz
Linda Klein – Margaret Latronica – Kathy Leibowitz
Maxene Liverpool – Mary Ellen LoConte – Jenny Marcotrigiano
Alison Marooney – Marie Marsac – Michaela McElhatton
Lois Miceli – Andrew Mihopoulos – Paul Nelson
Judy O'Connell – Karla Padawer Solomon – Linda Pierce
Rona Rappe – Marcy Ruggiero – Irwin Scharf – Stan Schickler
Arlyne Skolnik – Jeanmarie Tener – Blanche Tyrkko
Maria Vivona – Janine Washinger – Loretta White
Linda White – Colleen Woodell



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: CELESTE MALONEY

(submitted by Kelly Siry)

Celeste Maloney began volunteering with Literacy Nassau last year. She is currently a Level 3 tutor at the Hillside Library in New Hyde Park. Upon meeting Celeste at her English Language Learner Tutor Training Workshop her warm personality and giving spirit was immediately evident. I knew she would be a fantastic ELL teacher!

Please share a little background about yourself.

I was fortunate to have been a high school math teacher for over 40 years. I retired last year. I raised 5 children who are amazing, caring, unique adults working in 5 different careers. I also have 7 grandchildren who bring joy to my life! Now that I have more free time, I enjoy reconnecting with friends from high school and college. I have belonged to a wonderful Book Club with 7 other teachers for about 10 years now. We read a variety of books, mostly current, but also some classics. In the summer, I love spending time at the beach I also volunteer at my church by coordinating our monthly Hospitality Sundays.

Q: What inspired you to become a volunteer for us?

As retirement was approaching, I expressed to a friend that I would miss being a teacher. On a subsequent trip to his local library he noticed a tutor working with a group of non-English speaking adults. He suggested to me that I should look into doing that. I'm so glad I did! I have always enjoyed reading, but this is my first experience with Literacy Nassau.

Q: How has your life experience helped you to be a better tutor to your students?

Being a mother and a teacher has taught me to listen to my students! That is how I find out what they know, what they don't understand or what they would like to learn more about. And I often learn from them!

BACK TO SCHOOL, CONT'D.

(continued from page 1)

every morning, music blaring in the background, in the finished basement of his home in northern Connecticut. His novels often feature some scary characters, but he seems so even-keeled, so many of us wondered how he could create such believable antagonists, particularly ones the reader ends up feeling empathetic towards. He advised: "Let the character define the story. Go in with an open mind and let the character lead you." His coolest story, though, was about a time shortly after his first novel was published that he was at home doing laundry and received a phone call from Oprah - yes, Oprah Winfrey - asking him if he would be willing to list his book with "Oprah's Book Club." That single phone call basically launched his career.

Overall, Enders was an amazing experience, and for the rest of the semester I am working independently under the tutelage of a faculty mentor. I will keep you apprised of my progress!



Enders Island is owned by the Jesuits. It is used for retreats for priests, rehabilitation for those struggling with addiction, and other religious retreat experiences. Because Fairfield is a Jesuit school, they have unique access to this gorgeous space to inspire their students to write.



Celeste (center) surrounded by her students.

Do you have an inspirational quote you like to live by?

There is goodness in every person! You can accomplish anything you want if you believe in yourself and work hard! And above all else – trust God!

Q: What were you most apprehensive about before you began teaching an ESL group? Do you still feel the same?

I was worried that I wouldn't be able to understand them. That has not been a problem. When I don't understand something they are saying, the whole group chimes in to help me understand. It often leads to a few good laughs!!

Q: Working with people from different cultural backgrounds can be challenging but also enlightening, what have you've learned from your students?

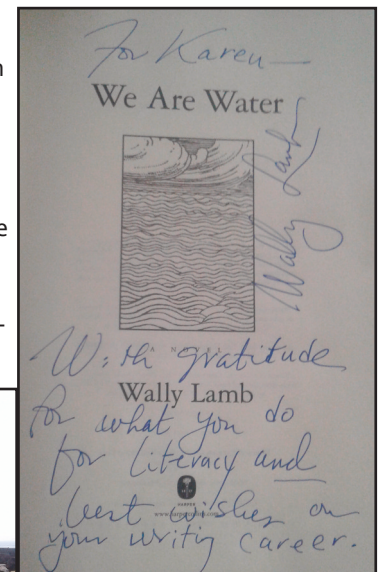
All people share the same emotions – Joy, sorrow, challenges, etc.

Q: Describe a moment when you felt fulfilled while teaching your class.

I feel fulfilled every time a student asks a question wanting more information. It shows they understand what we are talking about and are curious about wanting to know more about the topic. I also felt particularly fulfilled when a student wrote about how much I have helped her improve her English.

Q: What words of encouragement would you give someone who was thinking of becoming a Literacy Nassau tutor?

Definitely do it! You will love your students!



Above, a copy of *We Are Water* signed by Wally Lamb. Hearing him discuss his writing process was one of the highlights of my time at Enders, hands down.



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For all inquiries:

Kim – KNau@LiteracyNassau.org

Kelly – KSiry@LiteracyNassau.org

For copies of materials:

Anne-Marie – APoliviou@LiteracyNassau.org



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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH
9:00 AM TO 2:30 PM

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1/2 HOUR LESSON WITH AARON SILVERSTEIN OF
THE BRIDGE SCHOOL OF LONG ISLAND
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WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!