

Literacy Volunteers of America

NEW YORK STATE

Building Literate Communities

2001-2002 Annual Report



Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) began in New York State in 1962.

Above, Ruth Colvin, LVA founder, tutors her first student, Rev. Buster Smith, in 1965.

Today, Ruth continues her national role and serves as an Honorary Board Member of Literacy Volunteers of America – New York State. In 2002, LVA and Ruth Colvin celebrate 40 years of helping adult students gain literacy skills.

“Building Literate Communities”

MISSION

LVA-NYS supports community efforts to enable adults to gain the literacy skills needed to reach their full potential as individuals, parents, workers, and citizens.

Literacy Volunteers of America – New York State (LVA-NYS), a nonprofit educational organization, provides training and technical assistance to 48 local, community-based literacy programs in New York. In addition, LVA-NYS offers consultation services and support to literacy organizations nationally.

Since 1974, LVA–New York State’s leadership training, staff /board/organizational development, technology services and advocacy support have been instrumental in enabling local groups to build quality programs that provide Basic Literacy, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Family Literacy, and Workforce Education. Each year, more than 7,400 volunteers provide more than 407,700 hours of literacy tutoring to over 8,700 adult learners in New York State.

Strategic Plan and Directions:

- ◆ Provide state-of-the-art technical assistance, staff and board development for adult literacy organizations
- ◆ Aggressively advocate on behalf of adult literacy
- ◆ Engage in effective public relations and marketing efforts to further the cause of adult literacy
- ◆ Engage in effective resource development efforts to support LVA-NYS and its network



Diane Falise, Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers –Oswego County, working with the ALIES database at the White Eagle Institute in June.



Ruth and her famous refrigerator. Ruth used an old refrigerator to store papers, files and books when she first started LVA.

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) began in New York State in 1962. LVA Founder, Ruth Colvin, started tutoring literacy students in the early 60's and continues tutoring today. Along the way, her dream expanded into a national organization, and she has been an active leader, board member, speaker, author, trainer, and volunteer tutor every step of the way.

In 2002, LVA will merge with Laubach Literacy to form a new organization: ProLiteracy Worldwide. In this 40th anniversary year of LVA, Literacy Volunteers of America – New York State (LVA-NYS) is pleased to highlight Ruth's legacy and her work nationally, and especially her commitment to New York. Ruth serves as an Honorary Board member of LVA-NYS and has provided guidance and counsel to the board and staff of this organization since our founding in 1974.

LVA-NYS recently photographed Ruth tutoring at the Southwest Community Center in Syracuse. Although she's met with Presidents, foreign leaders and many celebrities – as you'll see from the photos inside – it is the students, as she always says, who are the most important part of Literacy Volunteers.

Change and Opportunity

The 40 year history of Literacy Volunteers of America (1962 - 2002) winds across a landscape of opportunities, challenges and successes. Students have learned, and volunteers have served. Board and staff have guided local, state and national offices during times when adult literacy was a hot issue and when it was not. During this evolution, LVA grew from a local direct service provider to a national organization serving more than 65,000 students and 40,000 volunteer tutors. Ruth Colvin's vision expanded beyond helping adults in her hometown of Syracuse, NY to helping adult learners in communities throughout America and the world.

Since 1974, Literacy Volunteers of America – New York State (LVA-NYS) has carried the LVA torch across New York and provided technical assistance, workshops, and consultation to 48 LVA affiliates. LVA-NYS' leadership in program management, technology, literacy and community development, training and technical assistance, and publications like the Literacy Practitioner helped LVA attain new heights, in New York and nationally. LVA-NYS is proud of the role we have played, and we remain dedicated to serve our constituents in the years and decades ahead.

During the 2001-2002 program year, LVA-NYS offered dozens of workshops at regional meetings and the White Eagle Summer Institute. We provided daily technical assistance onsite and via telephone, fax, e-mail and on the Web. Program Accreditation was the priority, but any issue of local concern warranted our response. We visited programs from the North Country to Long Island and from Albany to Buffalo logging thousands of miles.

Through the Accreditation process, LVA affiliates in New York are building strong organizations that will weather whatever changes lie ahead. The past year provided its usual challenges. We were faced with a late state budget, the continual challenge of funding adult literacy organizations, the constant task of communicating the important work we do, and a new challenge: dealing with the aftermath of September 11. New York's citizens face significant budget issues for the foreseeable future and the impact on volunteer literacy services remains uncertain.



Jim Donaldson (left) and Joe Gray (right) with Ruth when she signed the lease with Sutton Realty for office space for LVA in 1977.

Change and Opportunity

Now, add to all of these challenges a significant change in the literacy landscape. After 40 years as an independent organization, Literacy Volunteers of America will merge with Laubach Literacy in 2002 to form a new organization: ProLiteracy Worldwide. For LVA-NYS and the New York network of affiliates, the uncertainties associated with this change create questions, excitement, angst and opportunity.

LVA-NYS' Board of Directors recently affirmed that we will "continue to provide staff and organizational development support and training across New York State." A recent update of our strategic plan reestablished our priorities and confirmed our course. We look forward to the continued development of our state network of volunteer literacy programs. We understand the importance of our service to the New York State community. With your support, LVA-NYS will guide our network's future to maintain our viability and maximize our results.

LVA-NYS' opportunities have been great and our accomplishments significant. However, our greatest challenges, and opportunities lie down the road.



Ruth tutoring at the Southwest Community Center in Syracuse. May 2002.

In this 2001-2002 annual report, Literacy Volunteers of America – New York State is pleased to highlight LVA Founder, and LVA-NYS Honorary Board Member, Ruth Colvin. Ruth started tutoring adult students in Syracuse, NY in the early 1960's. In 2002, she is still tutoring at the Southwest Community Center. Along with tutoring, Ruth founded and helped nurture a national literacy organization; wrote and produced dozens of training manuals; attended board meetings and conferences; met with

foundations, corporations, legislators and Presidents; supported students, tutors and other volunteers, and staff at every level of the organization. Adult literacy has not had a more effective spokesperson and consistent advocate. As LVA national merges into ProLiteracy, we take this opportunity to share highlights of a 40 year history and a wonderful legacy.

Kathleen Casella
President, Board of Directors

Kevin Smith
*Executive Director and
Chief Operating Officer*

LVA and Ruth: The Early Years

In the early 1960s, Ruth Colvin was surprised to discover that there were many adult nonreaders in her own city of Syracuse, NY. “Illiteracy in America? I’d never even considered it as a problem. Middle-class life in the suburbs screened me from the world where books are never opened, and newspaper headlines never read... But my own reading skills brought me face to face with the 1960 U.S. Census figures. A 1961 Syracuse newspaper reported astonishing statistics: 11,055 functionally illiterate adults lived, not in India or Africa, but in my city and county.”



Ruth tutors Melvin Coleman in 1970. He was an LVA student, and a national Board member.

“Why doesn’t someone do something?”

Ruth Colvin, A Way With Words, 1983



Research and development has been a primary focus for Ruth since the early 1960’s.

From the beginning, an old refrigerator found new life as a file cabinet in Ruth’s first office.



Degrees and Awards

Through diligence and determination, Ruth helped create a national volunteer adult literacy organization with over 400 local programs across the United States. Her vision and energy have been a driving force for an organization that has served over a quarter of a million adult nonreaders.

Ruth's commitment and dedication have been rewarded with many national honors. Ruth received the National Volunteer Award in 1987, and was inducted into The National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993.



A great honor: Ruth gives her speech at The National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, NY, in 1993.



President Ronald Reagan presented Ruth the National Volunteer Award.

Ruth has received many awards and Honorary Degrees.



Ruth received an Honorary Degree from The State University of NY in 1986.



With Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (left) after receiving an Honorary Degree from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in 1992.

Program and Services

by Janice Cuddahee

Associate Executive Director - Program

It would be easy to look at 2001-02 and label it another year of transition. Change has become so much the norm that at times we don't even realize it... and all indications are that the future will be no different. Program Managers can, however, make two additional assumptions. First, the need for LVA services is greater than ever in our respective communities. Second, everything requires skillful leadership and flexibility.

Over the past four years almost every affiliate, supported by LVA-NYS, invested the time and energy to develop and implement organizational policies and systems. These policies and systems now guide everything from criteria for certifying and re-certifying tutors and trainers, to having a process for acknowledging contributions made by donors. For some affiliates it was "just a matter of getting it on paper." For others, board and staff grappled with long-standing assumptions and made decisions in the best interest of their local program.

It's no secret that the LVA Accreditation process was the catalyst, the framework, the opportunity, and yes, even the forced timeline for this development. No one doubted that Accreditation would be a great deal of work, but we also knew that without it, we would never give ourselves permission or time to stop and look at how and why we do things. It's possible to have systems in place that are not followed, but one very positive outcome is that no new incoming Director or Board President will begin work and have to start from scratch.

For LVA-NYS, the Accreditation process provided an invaluable opportunity to meet and learn more about each and every affiliate in the NYS network. We drove thousands of miles, met with hundreds of staff and board members and discussed issues important to each affiliate.

So what does this mean for the future? It does NOT mean that change or transition is any less likely. Nationally, Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy will still merge into ProLiteracy Worldwide. The New York State Education Department will implement the new database ALIES statewide. Cash flow problems and money management will continue to stress every organization. Some affiliates will lose prime staff, and one-third of the network



Mary Bartlett (left), Coordinator of Training for LVA-NYS, and participants at the White Eagle Institute in June.

will have new board leadership. Volunteers will continue to become an increasingly precious commodity, and we will continue to struggle with improving services to an increasingly diverse student population.

What the Accreditation process DOES mean is that we now are in a better position to make proactive, educated decisions in tackling all the issues that confront us daily. Having job



descriptions and annual plans and personnel policies in place makes it easier to hire the best candidates for jobs. Identifying board needs and having a system in place for recruiting, developing and supporting board members increases the chances of having an active and progressive board working in partnership with staff.

The ALIES database training at the White Eagle Institute in June.

What does Accreditation mean for LVA – New

York State? LVA-NYS believes that well-managed, not-for-profit organizations will have the best chance for organizational - and student - success. LVA needs to be viewed as a viable player in the human service and adult education communities, and we believe that Accreditation makes us more accountable. LVA-NYS will continue to encourage affiliates to see Accreditation work as an ongoing process, needing to be revisited and updated. It is, and will continue to be, good not-for-profit management.

How do we better serve adults in our communities that we strongly believe to be learning disabled? How do we better prepare volunteers to work with these same adults? How do we take advantage of opportunities in front of us to maximize our resources? As the 2001-02 program year ends, it's time to step up to the plate and look at some of the issues and questions that emerged during the past year: How do we make our programs more accountable? How do we develop boards to be strong partners?

Accreditation was always more than the certificate. As we got our houses in order, we learned a great deal about our individual affiliates, and about the network as a whole. Now it's time to take the next steps.

The Affiliates of New York State

WESTERN NEW YORK

LVA Allegany Co., Inc.
716/268-5213

LVA Chautauqua Co., Inc.
716/366-4438

LVA Buffalo & Erie Co., Inc.
716/876-8991

LVA Niagara Co.
716/278-8224

LVA Cattaraugus Co., Inc.
716/372-8627

LVA Orleans
716/589-9237

MID-WESTERN NEW YORK

LVA Genesee Co., Inc.
716/343-0802

LV Seneca Co.
315/539-1795

LVA Livingston Co., Inc.
716/658-7970

LV Wayne Co., Inc.
315/946-5333

LV Ontario County, Inc.
716/396-1686

LV Wyoming Co., Inc.
716/786-3890

LVA Rochester (Greater), Inc.
585/473-3030

LV Yates Co.
315/536-6799

CENTRAL/SOUTHERN NEW YORK

LV Broome/Tioga Cos., Inc.
607/748-5478

LV Otsego & Delaware Cos.
607/433-3645

LV Cayuga Co., Inc.
315/253-5241

LVA Steuben Co.
1-800/553-2033, Ext. 130

LVA Chenango Co.
607/334-7114, Ext. 273

LV Syracuse (Greater), Inc.
315/471-1300

LVA MidYork, Inc.
315/733-4529

LV Tompkins Co, Inc.
607/277-6442

LV Oswego Co., Inc.
315/342-8839

NORTH COUNTRY

LVA Clinton Co., Inc.
518/564-5332

LVA Essex/Franklin Cos., Inc.
518/942-7607

LV Jefferson/Lewis Cos., Inc.
315/782-4270

CAPITAL DISTRICT

LVA Fulton Co., Inc.
518/725-1440

LV Glens Falls, Inc.
518/793-7414

LV Greene & Columbia Cos.
518/822-8314

LVA Mohawk/Hudson
518/372-9819

LVA Rensselaer Co. (Greater)
518/274-8526

LVA Saratoga, Inc.
518/583-1232

LVA Schoharie Co., Inc.
518/234-2576

LVA Washington Co.
518/677-2644

HUDSON VALLEY

LVA Dutchess Co., Inc.
845/452-8670

LVA Eastern Orange Co., Inc.
845/561-1985, Ext. 15

LVA Middletown, Inc.
845/341-5460

LV Putnam Co.
845/628-8139

LV Rockland Co., Inc.
845/708-9072

LVA Sullivan Co.
845/794-0017

LV Tarrytowns, Inc.
914/631-7734

Ulster Literacy Association. Inc.
845/331-6837

LVA Westchester Co., Inc.
914/592-2656

LONG ISLAND

LVA Nassau Co., Inc.
516/486-2789

LVA Suffolk Co., Inc.
631/286-1649

“...they desperately need international help.”

Ruth Colvin, and her husband, Bob, have traveled the world on behalf of literacy since the early 1980's. In 2000, the Colvins visited Madagascar, responding to a request for training in English as a Second Language. “This is the 11th poorest country in the world,” Ruth explains, “and they desperately need international help. The national languages are Malagasy and French, but many of those who come to help only speak English.”

Ruth has been working on native language literacy and has written books in Malagasy for Madagascar, in Tok Pisin for Papua New Guinea, and has recently completed Spanish literacy books for a projected invitation to work in Guatemala.



Ruth with Bob Colvin, her husband and traveling companion. Bob was an LVA tutor for many years.



Ruth and Bob with a Papua New Guinea student, 1998.



With friends at an International Literacy Conference in Nigeria, 1991.

Today, Ruth has set her sights abroad. “When I knew LVA was going well, I decided to focus my efforts on the international,” she says. Now she and her husband, Bob, spend two to three months each year in places such as Madagascar and Cambodia, showing volunteers how to teach literacy in their own language.



Ruth tutoring in Swaziland in 1992.

1990's - Present Day

“Educating the World” is Ruth’s motto. She began tutoring her first student in 1965 and hasn’t yet stopped. During the past year, she tutored native Spanish-speaking students to read and write in Spanish. Ruth developed literacy lessons in Spanish and compiled them into a book, *Lectura y Escritura en Español*.



What does this say? Ruth at the 1996 LVA National Conference in Tulsa.

“Teaching literacy isn’t just about giving people an important skill, it’s about breaking down racial, cultural and educational barriers. Bringing people together can change attitudes. It’s like dropping a pebble in a pond. Once you do it, the ripples go on and on.”

—Ruth Colvin, 2001



Harry Seda, LVA National Student of the Year and Ruth.

Still tutoring after all these years...



Ruth tutoring at the Southwest Community Center, 2002.



Literacy Supporters

At the 1993 LVA National Conference, author Robert Fulghum said:

*“To read is to know, to know is to have power,
to have power is to be free.”*

Other supporters



With Jerry Greenfield, of Ben & Jerry's.



Ruth with Wally Amos (left) and Alex Haley (right) at the 1991 LVA Annual Conference.



Author, Robert Fulghum, and Ruth. 1993.

Women's Day magazine honored First Lady Laura Bush with the first ever "Women Who Inspire Us" award at a ceremony in New York City on October 31, 2001. Ruth was also nominated for this award.



First Lady Laura Bush and Ruth at the Women's Day Award in New York City, 2001.

In receiving the award, Mrs. Bush applauded the four other women nominees saying, "The women we honor today know what makes America strong: Healthy people, happy families, safe children, free enterprise, a good education with strong literacy skills, caring neighbors and willing volunteers."

Selected Financial Information

Literacy Volunteers of America—New York State, Inc. Income & Expenses for Year Ending June 30, 2001

INCOME:

Government Grants	\$ 1,088,254
Other Grants	8,815
Contributions	24,241
Affiliate Fees	4,815
Interest Income	3,028
Royalties	66
Commissions	4,853
Miscellaneous	3,554
Erie Community College	4,250
Buffalo Board of Education	10,000
Total Income	\$ 1,151,876

EXPENSES:

Salaries & Benefits	\$ 420,861
Payroll Taxes	33,987
Public Relations	9,217
Professional Fees	9,750
Contract Services	95,712
Training Expense	9,761
Supplies & Materials	16,014
Rent	26,911
Telephone & Internet	37,686
Postage	9,695
Travel	58,540
Printing	12,155
Dues & Subscriptions	3,904
Equipment & Maintenance	9,045
Insurance	3,448
Software Purchase & Support	37,322
Lobbying	13,802
Miscellaneous	472
Bad Debts	6,006
Interest	7,565
Services Provided by Affiliates	260,000
Total Expenses	\$ 1,081,853

Donations, Grants, and In-Kind Services

LVA-NYS receives its operating budget from New York State, foundation, corporate, and private contributions. We are please to thank those listed below for their generous grants, gifts, and in-kind services.

Throughout the year, LVA affiliates across New York help host meetings and regional in-service trainings. Their efforts ensure an atmosphere conducive to effective learning and information sharing. We thank them.

Individual

Linda Barager
Virginia Barton
Hank R. Bernstein
Robert & Leah Blumenthal
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John T. Chapin
Sibyl S. Cohen
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The Ferriday Fund
Verizon
Wal-Mart Foundation

The Literacy & Literature Book Auction



The Literacy & Literature project promotes the essential link between books - reading - literature and basic literacy through a silent auction of contemporary works. LVA-New York State wishes to thank the following authors for generously donating signed editions of their works for the Third Annual Literacy & Literature Book Auction:

Diane Ackerman
Betty Adcock
Julia Alvarez
A. Manette Ansay
Jeffrey Archer
Russell Atwood
Paul Auster
Mary Jo Bang
Russell Banks
Mark Bowden
Barbara Taylor Bradford
Sarah Ban Breathnach
Bill Bryson
Lorenzo Carcaterra
Jackie Chan
Fred Chappell
Julia Child
Charlotte Church
Mary Higgins Clark
Breena Clarke
Michael Collier
Jackie Collins
Francis Ford Coppola
Shana Corey
Catherine Coulter
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Linda Crew
Paula Danziger
Lee Dawson
Gavin de Becker
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Martin Espada

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A.L. Kennedy
Barbara Kingsolver
Galway Kinnell
Dean Koontz
David Lehman
Billie Letts
Gail Carson Levine
Margot Livesey
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Laura Glen Louis
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Elizabeth Winthrop
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Syracuse, NY

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As the world changes and the demands on individuals, families, and businesses increase, the definition of literacy also continues to shift. While concerns about inadequate literacy skills are not new, the nature of the concerns is evolving. In the past, literacy was considered the ability to read and use printed materials at an extremely basic level. Today, adults need higher levels of basic skills to function effectively in many areas of their lives, and literacy is defined more broadly to include problem-solving and higher level reasoning skills. Literacy is a range of tools that help people help themselves – and their children. It is not an end in itself, but a means to a better quality of life.

*From: The State of Literacy in America,
National Institute for Literacy, 1998*

Literacy Volunteers of America

NEW YORK STATE

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