

The Reader



Literacy
Volunteers of
Rensselaer
County

1915 5th Ave. Troy,
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www.lvorc.org

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Better English for Better Job Prospects

By Dave Garwood

Clement Niangoran and his wife, Rosalie, immigrated to the United States in 2006 from the Ivory Coast, West Africa, where French is the national language. With a technical school education, he worked as a mechanic and as a mechanical repair shop supervisor in his home country. Newly arrived in the United States and just starting to learn English, he found work in the housekeeping department of a nursing home in Albany. To get to work Clement rode on four buses, and then he took four buses to return home.

After some time he found work in the



housekeeping department of a hospital much closer to home and now can walk to work. Because of his limited English-speaking skills, he was transferred to the hospital laundry, where he now works the 3:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. shift.

Clement explains, "I do not speak English well enough to work in housekeeping. I need to learn to speak and understand English better, so I can get a better job." He goes on to say, "One day, when I went to a grocery store to buy a

phone card, I saw a card that said "LITERACY." That card is how I got to the Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County program. I started with Literacy Volunteers in December and I am very, very happy to have an English language tutor. English is a hard language to learn but I'm trying and trying to learn it. I need more practice and more learning, especially for speaking and listening and understanding."

Clement's tutor, Dave Garwood, contributed the story and the photo.

Stitching and Literacy in Rensselaer

By Julie Elson



Participants in the Sewing and English Class learn sewing techniques while practicing their English conversation skills.



Thank you to Betsey Kuzia, Jean Holmes, Rebecca Moran, Mary Helen Collen, Donna Gibson, Debra Fagans, and others who are helping to support the class with time, talent, and donations of materials and sewing tools.

What is going on in the former day care center room at the McManus Center? A Saturday literacy-based sewing class!

The Sewing and English class began in January, 2011 at the public library just down the street. One of the literacy volunteers had heard about a used sewing machine that someone wanted to give away. Knowing that some of the literacy students had held jobs in which they used sewing machines, she thought some of these sewers might like to have a machine of their own. When asked in class one day, several women expressed interest, as did women who didn't know how to sew but wanted to learn. So at first,

the project consisted of finding free sewing machines and placing them with women who knew how to sew.

The next phase was finding more machines and setting up a class at the library for the women who did not know how to sew. The class began with donated machines, fabrics and notions, and has been attended by both experienced and novice sewers. The class quickly outgrew the storage space and time available in the library. The Parish of St. John the Evangelist and St. Joseph offered the lovely furnished room in the McManus Center. The Parish has even printed signs for the window and interior door. The

class officially moved into its new quarters in June and has been meeting each Saturday from 1:00-4:30 p.m. (or so!) ever since.

The goals of the class are ambitious:

1. Improve English literacy. The sewing class provides a social environment in which participants learn sewing terms and techniques while practicing their English conversation.
2. Teach sewing skills which enable the students to make and alter clothing and home furnishings for their families.
3. Teach skills useful for employment.
4. Provide reliable machines to use at home.

For more about this class, please see "English Language Learners..." on Page 3.

Photos: Dave Garwood

English Language Learners Increase Community Involvement

When LVORC tutor Jean Holmes learned about the Sewing and English class, she helped to establish a connection with the Rensselaer County Home Bureau, of which she is a member. With their guidance, the sewers formed a new Home Bureau chapter called the Rensselaer International Crafters. Officers were elected and since September, one class each month begins with a Home Bureau

meeting.

Through the Home Bureau, members are learning how to run an organization and how to hold meetings. In addition, the Home Bureau connects with the larger Rensselaer community. Students will have opportunities to meet the members of the seven other chapters, women who are eager to share their homemaking and

crafting skills, organizational expertise, friendship and support with the members of the new chapter.

Please stop by and say hello. Perhaps you want to learn to sew, or have some time to share sewing skills - including machine repair and maintenance?

Donations of fabric and notions are happily accepted!

SAVE THE DATE

All are welcome to join us for a

Student and Volunteer Recognition Dinner

**Monday, April 16
6:00 p.m.**

1915 5th Avenue, Troy

Please bring a dish to share with others.

RSVP: 274-8526

GRANTS HELP LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

The Berkshire Bank Foundation has awarded a \$700 grant, and the Pitney Bowes Foundation and the Troy Community Leadership Team have provided \$4,000 to increase the scope of the "Everybody Wins!" program in the Capital Region. "Everybody Wins!" is a unique national lunchtime reading and mentoring program that pairs adult reading role models with students in

grades K-6. The adult volunteers meet with elementary school students each week while the children eat lunch. The program aims to improve children's reading skills and to instill a love of reading. For more information and to find out how to become involved, contact Barbara Wyman at 274-8526, or visit:

<http://everybodywins.org/>

Adult volunteers meet with elementary school students each week while the children eat lunch.



Literacy Volunteers Congratulates New Citizens

Students from Sudan and Sierra Leone Become Naturalized American Citizens



Mariama Massaquoi is learning to sew while she practices English.

Elshekh Saad is a student in the Workplace Literacy Program.



Congratulations to Elshekh Saad and Mariama Massaquoi, two adult language learners who have become naturalized U.S. citizens. Sworn in on January 20 and 27, respectively, Elshekh and Mariama took the Oath for Citizenship at the United States District Court in Albany. The hour-long ceremony began with some welcoming remarks from the judge and elected officials and included patriotic songs performed a *cappella* by guest

vocalists. Certificates of Citizenship were presented to almost 60 people on each occasion.

Elshekh has been a student in the workplace literacy program at Blasch Precision Ceramics for four years. The program is made possible with funding from the Workforce Development Institute.

Mariama participated in the English Literacy Civics program and is now learning to sew while improving her

English skills each Saturday afternoon at the Sewing and English class in Rensselaer.

Congratulations also to:

Xueming Lin

Aye Aye Naing

Ayanlake Gabriel Okunoye

Naw Eh Phaw

New Citizenship Class in Albany

Are you thinking about becoming a U.S. Citizen? Are you ready to study the 100 Questions? Come to learn more about the United States and to prepare for the Naturalization Test.

Mr. Tom Gizara and Mrs. Pat Kenyon will instruct this class on

Wednesdays and Fridays, starting on Wednesday, January 25, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The class will be held at the Cathedral of All Saints at the corner of South Swan and Elk Streets in Albany, one block from Washington Avenue and from the State Capitol.

For more information or to register for this class, please contact Pat Kenyon by e-mail at JHBKP@aol.com.

In other news: Sam and Helen Win are now living in a Habitat for Humanity house in Troy. We wish them the best of luck in their new home!



Literacy Volunteers Announces Spring 2012 Tutor Training Schedule

Do you want to change a life for the better? Become a tutor! We can train you to help someone learn to read, write, and/or speak English.

The Spring Tutor Training will be held at the East Greenbush Community Library, 10 Community Way, East Greenbush. This training will be offered on six Wednesdays, from 5:45 to 8:45 p.m., starting on March 7th and ending on April 18th.

As a tutor trainee you will begin with a 3-hour Orientation/Introduction to Tutoring, followed by two Basic Literacy and/or English Language Learning sessions. A Successful Tutoring workshop concludes the training. A \$35 materials fee is requested; scholarship money is available if needed.

To register and for more information visit www.lvorc.org or call us at 274-8526.

East Greenbush Library:
www.eastgreenbushlibrary.org



Graduates of the Winter 2012 Tutor Training Workshop at Hudson Valley Community College

Bowling for Literacy at Uncle Sam Lanes in Troy

Fun for the Whole Family!

On Saturday, March 3rd, the first Literacy Volunteers Bowl-a-Thon will be held at Uncle Sam Lanes in Troy, N.Y. from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 per person before the event and \$20 at the door. The ticket price includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental, and bowling ball.

There will be raffles for prizes, and food and drink will be available from Uncle Sam Lanes.

Bowl as an individual, or a captain can recruit 3-5 teammates (maximum 6 people per team). Anyone interested in being a team captain should contact Kristin Morgan at kmmorgan@nycap.rr.com for details.



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We're on the Web!

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Literacy Run/Walk 2012 Returns to Downtown Troy, Sunday, May 6



Monument Square. For registration fees and a full description of the course, visit www.lvorc.org.

Race Day Schedule:

8:00 a.m. Registration,
Troy Atrium, Corner of
3rd St. and Fulton St.
Pre-registration fee: \$20;
Race day registration \$25

9:00 a.m. Children's Fun Run
Registration fee \$6

9:30 a.m. Youth Mile
Registration fee \$10

10:00 a.m. 5K Run/Walk
11:15 a.m. Awards Ceremony

Early packet pickup and pre-registration at Troy Atrium, Sat., May 5, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

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On Sunday, May 6, 500 runners will be in Troy for our biggest fundraiser of the year. The Literacy Run/Walk 5K raises much-needed funds for programs serving adults and families in greater Rensselaer County.

Registration will be held at the Troy Atrium. The 5K, the Children's Fun Run, and the Youth Mile will begin at

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