



# LitBits

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## 50 Years Young!



Mrs. Ruth Colvin, founder of the Literacy Volunteer program, stands before the first "office" of the organization — an old refrigerator in her basement.

LVR founder Ruth Colvin

This year, 2014, marks the 50th anniversary of a number of events that have shaped our culture: the arrival of the Beatles, dealing with the repercussions of Kennedy's assassination, and the War on Poverty. Here, at LVR, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of our organization, and the women who made it happen.

A few committed women gathered in the Spring of 1964 to charter the Rochester chapter of Literacy Volunteers of America—and the rest, as they say, is history. For 50 years dedicated individuals have volunteered their time to learn and to teach. Together, we have moved from a group of "ladies," to a cadre of nearly 300 volunteers and more than 500 students who meet in libraries, and coffee shops, in school



LVR's 25th Anniversary Celebration

district buildings, and in community centers. They meet to learn English as a second (or third) language, reading, basic math, and computer literacy. We also meet in small groups for defined periods of times, and on a drop in basis to deal with the immediate issues presented by computer forms, e-mail addresses, or basic literacy problems that can be overcome with a single meeting.

Over the past 50 years we have reached many thousands of people; we have helped our constituents attain citizenship, apply for jobs, and qualify for promotions. Parents have been able to assist their children and grandchildren with school work, and administer medication. Our students have become licensed drivers, and



Barbara Bush visits LVR in 1984

obtained certification; they have been able to attain admission into schools, colleges and graduate programs. Our tutors have learned new customs, and made lifelong friends. Our volunteers have learned new skills, and provided services that range from office management to special event planning.

We have much to celebrate, and we will begin with a luncheon on May 8 at the County Club of Rochester. Our Literacy Leadership Fund will help guarantee that our services will be here for the next 50 years – THAT'S 2064 – if you are counting! Individual tickets are available for \$50.00. There are still several sponsor tables available. Please call Susan Kramarsky at 473-3030 or send an e-mail to [skramarsky@literacyrochester.org](mailto:skramarsky@literacyrochester.org)

# A Message from Executive Director Bob Mahar

George Bernard Shaw, in a statement of irony, is quoted, "It is the mark of a truly intelligent person to be moved by statistics." At LVR we are often so caught up in our numbers that we sometimes fail to remember the stories.

A new student, we will call her "Dianne", a 55 year old grandmother who came to Literacy Volunteers through a referral from her church, and is now working toward her high school equivalency and wants to open her own business. In a very courageous moment, Dianne had stood up in church and testified about her lack of literacy skills. She had only completed 10th grade, and was reading at a 4th grade level. Last October she was matched with her tutor "Britt," a retired school teacher who has been volunteering with LVR for over 15 years, and they began the journey.

Britt encouraged Dianne to read and to write. Each lesson built upon the last and the world began to open up for Dianne. She was able to read things that had been beyond her reach and to imagine what was yet to come. For Britt there was great satisfaction in

the progress that she saw and it was easy to encourage Dianne.

Early in March these two women shared Dianne's first written assignment with LVR.

## THE BIG BOX

*I was looking through the catalog for a bedding set of eight pieces.*

*"Too much money."*

*I will look again in June to see if the price has gone down. But before that happened UPS came to my door with a big box. I did not open it for one hour! My name was on it but, for what my sister told me she was sending me, the box was too big.*

*When I did open the box I cried. It was a beautiful bedding set and when I looked at the card it said not "eight piece set" but "18 pieces." I cried once again. I said that God blessed me. I did not have to wait for the price to go down. God gave me more than what I wanted.*

We are so very happy for both student and tutor and wish them continued success.

Will you share this story with one person that you know and ask them to join the "LVR family"?

We have a list of students awaiting tutors, we have opportunities for classroom tutors or teaching assistants in both reading and math, we have need for Literacy Navigators working in community centers and libraries to help people on a drop in basis, and, of course, we need funds to support our operation - everything from photocopies to craft materials for family literacy workshops.

Please remember that behind the statistics are real people whose lives are changed by the passion that we share! We look forward to sharing more amazing stories and some pretty amazing statistics about 50 years of service at the luncheon on May 8.



## Save the Date!

50th Anniversary Luncheon

May 8, 2014

12-1:30 PM

Country Club of Rochester

Office Closed

Good Friday - April 18, 2014

Brain Game

October 16, 2014

5-8 PM

Radisson Rochester Riverside

# Polar Vortex Did Not Keep LVR Tutors Away

On January 25, the spirit of inquiry and dedication of 30+ plus tutors warmed the classrooms and meeting rooms at St. John Fisher College!

Hosted by Board member and St. John Fisher professor Melissa Bissonette, the conference provided tutors with information about the new High School equivalency exam, effective lesson planning, and a host of other topics.

"The dedication of our volunteers is extraordinary!" said Bob Mahar, Executive Director of LVR.

Bonnie Martin, our librarian, prepared materials, and presented a round table discussion. Cathy Pospula, an LVR trainer, presented a small group session to a SRO audience, and newcomer Betty Richenderfer assisted staff member Mellissa Woodhams in organizing conference materials. It was an amazing effort, and we are most grateful to all of our volunteers.

If you have not yet attended a tutor conference, you are missing a wonderful opportunity for

learning from and teaching your colleagues! Planning is underway for the 2015 conference; please feel free to contact Mellissa Woodhams, with suggestions.

## TASC replaces GED

*"In a tight economy, Adult Basic Education funding has remained flat for years and access to technology has not improved much. In this environment, it is crucial that a high quality high school equivalency assessment remains available"* - McGraw Hill, authors of the new TASC

On January 1, 2014, the High School Equivalency exam (known for decades as the GED) was replaced by the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion). This is a significant change for both our tutors, and for the organization as a whole. While we do not yet have all of the materials to support the changes, we are making every effort to assist the students who have come to us for assistance.

"TASC is a national high school equivalency assessment that assesses five subject areas including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. It

measures examinees' levels of achievement relative to that of graduating high school seniors, and career and college readiness, as outlined by the Common Core State Standards." (McGraw Hill) Every change brings both challenges and opportunities – **for 50 years LVR has been here to meet the challenges and provide opportunities.**

LVR does not administer the test, but it is our goal to assist our students to prepare for this test. Many of our students demonstrate great courage in coming to us – we applaud their effort and with the support of the whole community stand ready to help.



LVR Trainer Cathy Pospula leads a conference session on vocabulary development.



LVR Services Coordinator Mellissa Woodhams welcomes the conference attendees and shares info from Literacy New York about the new TASC test for HS equivalency.

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**May 2 & 3 Greenwood Books is honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LVR by donating a portion of the proceeds of every item sold to Literacy Volunteers of Rochester. Greenwood Books is a longtime friend of LVR and we ask that you support LVR and Greenwood by mentioning your connection and visit Greenwood at 123 East Avenue from 11AM to 6 PM.**

*Did you know?*

**You can make a donor-designated gift to Literacy Volunteers of Rochester through United Way!**



You can specify that your gift to the United Way campaign goes to Literacy Volunteers of Rochester simply by asking for a Donor-Designation Form. Then fill out with our agency designation number 240.

Your donation ensures that we can **continue to support adult literacy in our community as we have for the past 50 years!**

Thank you for your generous support!

**#240**



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**Tribute and Memorial Donations**

Please remember that another way to support Literacy Volunteers of Rochester is through your tribute and memorial donations. LVR is pleased to accept donations in celebration of special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and retirements as well as in memory of volunteers, donors, family, and friends. An LVR contribution is also the perfect gift to honor that person who doesn't need another "gift" and would appreciate knowing that LVR is benefiting from your generosity. Use our secure, online giving option at [www.literacyrochester.org](http://www.literacyrochester.org) or give us a call at 585-473-3030.

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