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Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford Recognized by Library of Congress

Adult literacy group honored for work addressing social barriers to literacy

Hartford – Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford (LVGH) was recognized this week at the Library of Congress Literacy Awards in Washington, D.C., for its work to promote adult literacy in the region.

The nonprofit, volunteer-based adult literacy organization was one of just fourteen groups nationwide selected for inclusion in the Library’s Best Practices Publication, which recognizes model programs using evidence-based practice to promote literacy. Specifically, LVGH was honored for its work addressing social and cultural barriers to literacy. Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra nominated the organization for the Library of Congress award earlier this year, and Congressman John Larson also recommended the group. Earlier this week, LVGH staff joined other honorees from around the world at a ceremony in the nation’s capital.

“We are deeply honored to have our work recognized by the Library of Congress, which has done so much to promote the cause of literacy around the world,” said Carol DeVido Hauss, LVGH Executive Director. “Inclusion of our program in the Best Practices Publication reflects the collective efforts of our volunteer tutors, students, staff, community partners, and funders to create an inclusive, supportive, and culturally appropriate learning environment for adults.”

As defined by the Library of Congress, social and cultural barriers to literacy can include the stigma of using a means-tested (income-based) program, “a lack of engagement with the materials, and concerns about whether literacy and verbal proficiency in a dominant language will separate learners from their heritage.” LVGH’s model attempts to address all of these factors. Classes are open to any adult who wants to improve their English literacy, without regard to income, immigration status, or other factors (although most students are low-to-moderate income). Professional staff train volunteer tutors to facilitate small-group classes using a nationally-recognized, standard curriculum especially designed for adults. Textbooks are carefully selected for their cultural competence, and are reviewed annually to ensure their effectiveness and suitability.

The Library of Congress’ Best Practices Publication also promotes the importance of cultural engagement in encouraging participation in literacy services, and recognized LVGH for a new initiative in this area. To encourage increased enrollment in ESOL classes, last year LVGH partnered with the Brazilian Consulate in Hartford to pilot a program that provides the English-speaking children of Brazilian immigrants with Portuguese classes, while providing their parents with English classes taken simultaneously. The Library acknowledged the program’s success at helping immigrant-led families to maintain cultural ties across generations while gaining the skills to participate fully in civic and economic life.

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford is the largest private provider of adult literacy services in the Greater Hartford region, serving nearly 900 adult students each year. Since 1972, LVGH has helped over 10,000 adults learn to read, write, and speak English. In addition to basic literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, instruction is provided in math, GED preparation, computer/digital literacy, and U.S. citizenship preparation.

The complete Library of Congress Literacy Awards 2014 Best Practices Publication is available at www.read.gov. For more information about Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford, please visit lvgh.org or call 860-233-3853.

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