

*Literacy of Northern New York*  
*Newsletter December 2025*

*Happy Holidays to Our Students, Tutors, and  
Everyone! ~ From the staff at Literacy of Northern  
New York*



We want to express our appreciation to all our tutors for their dedication. They give up several hours a week to prepare for their lessons and tutor their students. We see the positive results when we post-test the students. Our students also appreciate their tutors. We could not do what we do without our tutors.

### **Upcoming Webinar on Zoom**

You are invited to join us and our colleagues, the New York City ALE programs, for an informative webinar highlighting **Learning Disabilities and Adult Learners!** The webinar gives an overview of three common learning disabilities in adults, and offer strategies to support teaching and learning.

The presentation will be provided by Liz Jackson, the NYC Support and Technical Assistance Center (STAC) Director. Liz has extensive education and experience in this field, along with firsthand knowledge of adult literacy programs.

The webinar is scheduled for Monday, January 12th, from 11:30am to 12:30pm. Registration deadline is Friday, January 9th. Please register [here](#).

People who register for this webinar will receive a Zoom link closer to the date of the presentation.



## *Fort Drum News*

Fort Drum classes are back in session after the government shutdown in October and part of November. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the classes because Fort Drum is on federal property, but classes are in full session now. We are grateful to have Barbara Zembiec teaching the classes.

### *From Fort Drum Teacher Barb -*

The ESL students at Fort Drum have enjoyed being back in class following the government shutdown. Both classes continue to build their English skills through work on vocabulary, listening, reading, writing, and pronunciation. Students enjoy getting to know one another, and regular conversation between class members is an important part of developing strong English communication skills. All of the students should be proud of their progress!



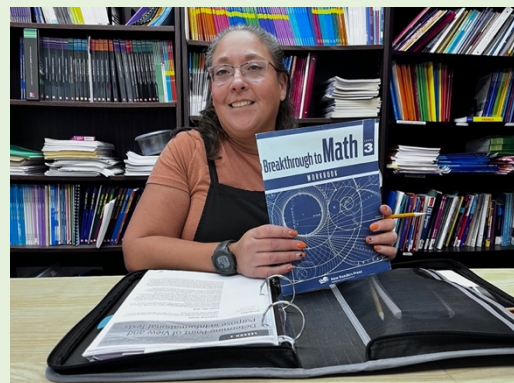
*Mantaj, from Bangladesh, attends beginner class. She is fascinated by the snow.*



*Beginner & Intermediate students*

## *Watertown News*

Our Beginner and Intermediate English Language Learner classes in Watertown meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. As winter embraces the North Country, many learners take a break because some are walkers and the conditions are cold. Our tutors are busy working with their students and we have two tutors helping their students to prepare to take the CDL test (Commercial Driver's License).



*Cecilia's student, Betsy, who is preparing to take portions of the GED® test in Jan.*

## *ELL Tutor Tip*

Here is a suggestion to use with Intermediate learners. You can print the accompanying text to the audio and also play the audio for a short activity. Each story is 2-3 minutes long. Students easily understand the language and learn new idioms and expressions. For example “mantra,” “unsung hero,” and “pay it forward.” You can use the series for discussion or as a writing activity. Students enjoy these stories and they often generate a lot of conversation in the class.

## *My Unsung Hero*

“The daily news can fill us with despair. My Unsung Hero is an antidote to that despair. Each episode reveals what the news ignores: everyday acts of kindness and courage that transformed someone’s life. Listen — and renew your faith in humanity.” (from National Public Radio)

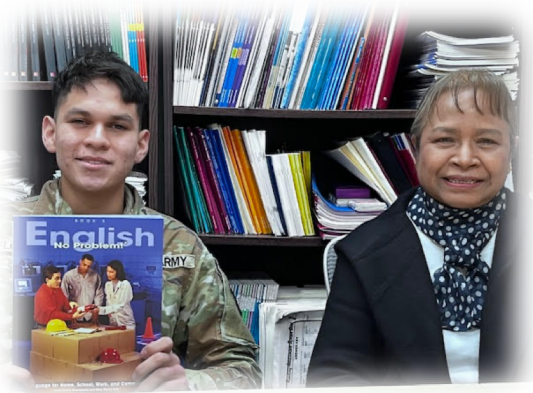
Here is the link:

<https://www.hiddenbrain.org/myunsunghero/>

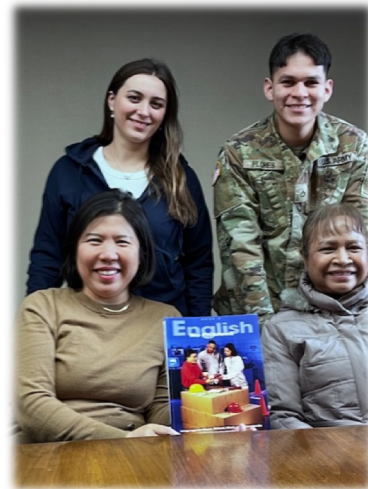
You can also find it on the NPR special series -

<https://www.npr.org/series/1134955065/my-unsung-hero-from-hidden-brain>

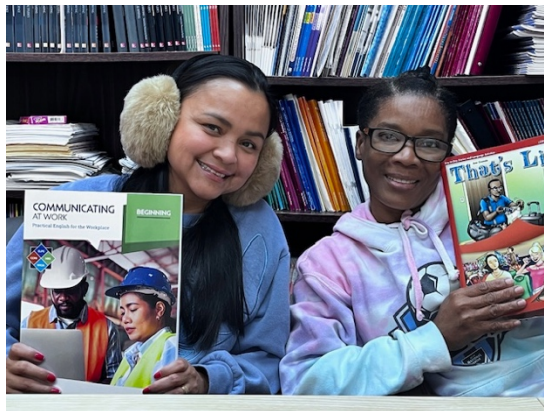
## *Students Enjoy Textbooks Received from the National Book Fund*



*Michael & Praneed, with one of the texts from ProLiteracy's National Book Fund grant.*



*Top row - Zoriana (left), Michael, Bottom row - Joyce (left), Praneed*



*Madeleine (left) & Phanie enjoying textbooks we received from ProLiteracy's National Book Fund grant.*



## A Tip to Engage ELL Learners

### Tips for Clear Communication & Engaging ELL Groups

Scaffold New Content	Adjust What You Say
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of pre-teaching language &amp; content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Activating background knowledge</li> <li>→ Previewing content (text/photos/images)</li> <li>→ Pre-teaching key vocabulary</li> <li>→ Making predictions, asking questions</li> </ul> </li> <li>Examples of Visual Supports while listening/reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Gestures / expressions</li> <li>→ Objects</li> <li>→ Images</li> <li>→ Text - see it and hear it</li> <li>→ Portable white board</li> <li>→ Highlighting key vocabulary</li> <li>→ Graphic organizers</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak less!</li> <li>Keep It Simple! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Stick to frequently used words</li> <li>★ Use simple sentence structure</li> <li>★ Use active verbs</li> <li>★ Use present tense &amp; simple past tense</li> <li>★ Try to avoid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Phrasal verbs, Idioms, Slang, Fillers</li> <li>◆ Complex sentence structure, long noun phrases/clauses, etc.</li> <li>◆ Conditionals (would have, might have), passive voice (was written by...)</li> <li>◆ Long-winded explanations</li> <li>◆ Culturally specific references</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Repeat, restate, rephrase! (Indicate - "Again,..."/ "In other words,...")</li> </ol>
Adjust How You Say It	Incorporate Comprehension Checks
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow down: Speak slower, but not too slowly</li> <li>Speak clearly: Enunciate, limit blending / elisions / reductions</li> <li>Chunk: Speak in phrases/thought groups</li> <li>Pause: Give wait time for responses</li> <li>Incorporate visual supports &amp; comprehension checks (see above/right)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions (open-ended, yes/no)</li> <li>Check-ins / poll / barometer / on a scale of 0 to 10... / exit ticket</li> <li>Ask for questions</li> </ol> <p>★ <i>Make sure to give "wait time" for nonnative speakers to formulate responses.</i></p>
<p>As you LISTEN: Stay present. Stay active. Look for ways to encourage the nonnative speaker. Check for your own biases and assumptions creeping in.</p>	