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Constance Summers
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Michael Tonic
Nancy West
Dale Williams
Venite Williams



FOREWORD

The following pages feature stories that almost went unwritten. They are told by men and women who have much to say even though their voices are not always heard. As you read these stories, keep in mind what a treat it is that these voices have been expressed. You are reading words from students who almost did not know how to write them down. Some express hope and optimism, others describe feelings of frustration and doubt. All are honest with you, the reader.

Bear in mind how difficult it can be to express oneself in written word. There is a considerable amount of risk involved in discussing one's thoughts and emotions. It is every writer's fear—have I exposed too much? What if my words or ideas are met with rejection?

The adult learners of LVA have taken an even bigger risk. In writing these stories, they have shared something of themselves with you. When the students began writing, many did not know where to begin. Which story could they tell for the world to hear? Even when they found the voice and the words, writing it down was a big hurdle. Often they were unsure of spelling, and grammar. They had to ask for help, use dictionaries, and go back to edit.

But when they pushed through, many of them found a lot of joy in the process. "I do love writing," one of our students writes in his submission. So many others expressed surprise that they were able to write down their stories. "You can understand what I wrote? I never knew I could do this." Many were delighted to learn that they had the power to tell their stories on paper.

Literacy Volunteers and Advocates is very proud to present to you the 10th Edition of *Write From The Heart*. Please take the time to read all of these stories as each one has something special to say. Thank you and enjoy!



COMING TO LVA

Hi my name is Mr. Williams I attended to LVA for 10 years. When I start going to LVA I could not read or write. I use to pretend that could do both. One day a friend came to me and told me about LVA. So I made it up in my mind to go and check the school out. The first two months I was debating to stop going. But then I start working with a group of students that was willing to work and learn like me. So I came everyday when I was suppose to come. I had tutors that work very hard and helpful to me.

I'm no longer ashamed now. I read the newspaper, books, mails, signs everywhere, and read out in Sunday school for my lesson. I have wrote short stories and sermons for school, church and nursing homes. My tutors teacher and classmates have encourage me so much I want to give back to LVA what I have learn to help the new comers.

I want to thank everyone that had a part in helping me to become the reader and writer that I am. May God bless each and every one of you.

- Mr. Dale L. Williams



When I first meet my tutor Kathleen was standing in the hall. I didn't know who she was until we meet in the room together. She introduced her self as Kathleen and I introduced my self as Faye Christian. She tutors people who need help with reading. She told me to meet her at the Library every Wednesday at noon. She inspired me a lot with reading and homonyms words that sound a like. Some times it is hard but Kathleen said "you can do it don't give up." I love this lady. Some times I feel like giving up, but she pushes me to stay focused. She is truly a special person. She is caring and understanding. She is wonderful.

-Faye Christian



As you may all know, I am not well litterate. I'm slower than a lot of you. However I'm not going to school for you, and however long it takes if the school be around that long get everything I'm going to accomplish. That incudes reading writeing math and it be Gods will my GED.

-Agnes Cassell

My name is Patricia Hassock. I was born in Jamaica. I have been in the U.S. almost 20 years before I met Dr. Aisha King. I am thankful to her because she helped me a lot. But when she told me about LVA, that was the best day of my life.

I just want the world to know that I am proud to be a LVA student and I love all my teachers ver much. They encourage me to come to school ever day by the way they help me to learn, especially my tutor. Shee is the best, she is doing ever thing to let me learn she learn me thing that I never know and I thank her very much. This is strate from the hart.

-Patricia Hassock



I was coming to LVA.
I was nervous for the test.
That test I be much better.
At home I was doing my work and study.

-Venite Williams



How I Made A Break Through In Learning The Internet

When I first signed up for the computer class I was very nervous but not anymore.
I met my instructor Ms. Brandi, she taught me all types of thing's about the computer. At first I didn't know how to get on the computer not up until now. I really want to thank my fellow classmates and my instructor, who is a very patient person that's why I finally had a break through in learning the computer. Now the computer is becoming my best friend not my enemy anymore.

Sincerely yours,
Elentheia Y. Smith



P.S. I want to thank the L.V.A. and the staff. That's how I made a Break through in learning the computer.

Thank, you
-Elentheia Smith

I do love living here at Washington, DC. I do feel safe to living here at Washington DC because I do feel better here at Washington DC. They got the best training school here. They do love to teach you real good that why I love this best school LVA in Washington, DC. I do love to come to this beauty school in Washington DC because I want to learn more with my reading. I want to get better because it's fun reading. You will love that you will feel good to reading. And you will feel good that's why I came back to school, because I want to get better with my reading. I love to reading because is fun. I like it. I want to go to new training for a good better job. I am look for a new training school to learn about training because I want to work that I like to do. Because I want to make a lot of Big Good money because I do need that money now. Because I want to save all my money in the bank. Because I want to go out shop for a new family home. I do love to work because is fun that I love to do in my life. I do love writing is fun. I want to be a Good best writing in the world because that is job I want to do because that is fun job for me that I love to do in my life. I do love to help out because I do care all lot more. That is my Heart in Soul.

-Rodney Glenn Higgins



I went to high school.
I finished high school.
But I can't read a lot.
I went to job training.
I got a Job cleaning.
I been to LVA long time.
I got a big family.
I been help in school.
I been in special education.

-LaKeisha Price



I want to be in the first class. It's a good class to learn from with my reading and my teacher name Henry. Henry is a good teacher to learn from him. In the class he sound out the spelling word for you to learn. Wonderful teacher he help us a lot. With my reading and math to get a better job to make more money, not ask nobody for no more to borrow no money from no one else. Soon I can buy me a house I am tired if I lived in my new apt I like peace and quiet. I want a house to

my own and get my drivers license this year before it get to cold.
Constance L Summers born in Wash DC. The day I was born in DC
General Hospital day of born on 3-9-1952 I have good parent my
mother and father the best people in the worlds. May God bless a
parent and father and mother and grandparent and grandfather and
aunt and uncle and cousin and friend.

-Constance Summers



The first time I decided to get tutoring with Literacy Volunteers and Advocates (LVA), I thought who will they put me with; will he or she be patient, understanding and will I be committed to the program and will I stick to it? A couple of months prior, I took a diagnostic test at George Washington University, the person from the college showed me a chart of my IQ and showed me how I learned. She tried to tell me I was mildly retarded. I was very upset, thinking to myself, Tokie, don't act like a fool, yelling, screaming, falling apart, but I did, right in front of them. I called later and told her how I felt and she replied, "There is nothing I can do, you should get therapy or accept it."

A couple months later, after I got out of my pity party, I called Martin Lither King Library to research different programs to see what services are out there to help adults who have learning disabilities and I chose LVA. The people from LVA were very compassionate. They tested me and they did not say that I was mildly retarded. I believe that with all the tutoring, when I go back to college I will be successful because I will have learned everything I needed to learn.

When the right time comes I will take the diagnostic test again, I will do great and I will be proud of myself. I will not have to worry about people putting me in a box by telling me I am mildly retarded, which is not true!

I have worked with men with special needs for two years and it is very stressful, but I love helping others. I mentor teen girls and I also write poetry that empowers people and vice-versa, it empowers me.

If I can help others, I can help myself. I truly believe in my heart, soul and mind that with hard work and having a great support group I can succeed. My tutor is patient, understanding and says, "Okay I know it's hard but you have to believe in yourself because I believe in you."

-Tokie Jones

POETRY

Heaven

What is Heaven like?
Heaven is crystal light.
Heaven is a shining star.
Heaven is a radiant beam.
Heaven has golden streets with silver rubies.
Heaven meets Jesus' face; glowing and shining it lights up your face.
Heaven is a golden gate where angels welcome you.

-Martha Freeman



Why I Fight

Why I fight

I fight to get by
Being a black woman
Who has time to ask why?

I fight to eat
Who else is going to do it?
I got kids to feed

I fight to be here
Who am I to ask God
Why do I live?

I fight to move up the ladder of success
Stop pulling me down
I've been here too long
Who cares you have a frown?

Day by day I'm going to pray
I'm going to pray till judgment day
"Why?"
That's how I was raised

So don't ask me why I fight

Just know I do
And if you want to make it in this world
Honey, you'll do the same too

-L.N.S.



J ollie
U nderstanding
L ove
I nspiration
E xciting
T ruthful
T alkative
E xample

-Juliette Rowland



S mile
H appy
I nteresting
R eady reader
L ove
E ve
Y ellow sunshine

-Shirley Ashley



J oyful
O utstanding
A mazing
N ice
A good friend

Joana is nice person and friendly and good person
and help me to read

-Amber Meyer

D uring struggles always stayed positive
O thers are always encouraged
R esponsible and wise
E verybody loves to be around
T rustworthy and thinks problems through
H elpful and gives me guidance
A supportive person to talk to

-Felicia Jackson



The Lilly are very alive
They do die soon or later
They are very beautiful
Sun shine on them
Make you want to intertwine
Them in flowers

-Mary Payton



The Feeling of Driving

The day I drove my mother's car
I remember driving to Baltimomre
it was a caprice classic
I just wanted to drive to Baltimomre
on the highway
it was easy, I just followed the signs
I ended up at the harbor I did not have
any monay so I sat and watch the boats
and I came home



The story of Vincent VanGogh

Van Gogh loves to paint
He loves to help poor people
even though he was also poor
His mental illness didn't stop his creativity

-James Mason

FAMILY

Family

Trust them, always depend on them you can count on it, for them to leave you in your worst times I doubt it. That's what a family for, To be there, that first knock at the door, with them your sadness moments turn in to the happiest days of your life. They always will be there, threw thick and thin, Right or wrong but us being together feels like a beat from a very soft song. No one will never know how it feels to have the family I do. We have fun it's really crazy if you only knew. We cry, we smile, laugh, and frown but at the end of the day I have the best family around town.

-Satrina Oates



I will talk to mother every day.
I will talk my family every day.
I will talk my brother most every day.
I will call my sister sometime.
I will call uncle sometime.
I give aunt some love.
I always go to class every day.
Sometime people annoy me most time.
I have help people with their homework.

-Steven Johnson



Antione Tyrone Avery

On March 30, 1980 at 4:50 pm, you were born. That was the happiest day of my life. Tyrone you are my son, my best friend, the figure of my father that's no longer around. Myself, your grandmother and your wife are so proud of you. Keep on doing what you're doing. Tyrone you are my heart and I wouldn't trade you for anything in the world. We love you and God bless you and happy birthday.

Love always , Mom



-Maybelle Avery

As a child, I started seeing my friends and family with new money and new cars. The new money and the new cars last for a while but after a while the people I know and love, family and friends, started to die or go to prison. My mom was sick and in pain and my son was incarcerated. When I lost my mom, I lost my best friend. I miss my son. I miss him sampling my food and kissing me on my neck. I heard God's voice call me. He prepared me for my mom's death and gave me peace. He said I am with you for eternity.

-Shirley Ashley



I was taking my child to school. We had to cross the street to get there. I stop to tie my shoe and when I got up she was gone. I called her and I got no answer. I got scared. I ask the crossing guard "Have you seen Katrease?" She said no so I panicked. So I used her phone to call the police. Then I ask three parents, have they seen her. They said no. One of the parents let me use her phone to call the school. I went inside of the school. She was eating breakfast! Afterwards we had a talk with her and the teacher and the caseworker. I hope she learn not to walk away. Anything could have happen to her on the way to school. I know she wants to walk to school. She is only five. That is too young for any child to walk to school on their own.

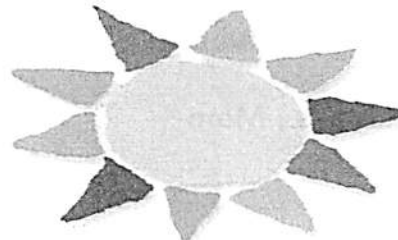
-Kelli Bell



My Mother Is A Wonderful Lady

My mother she is a dedicated member of Vermont Avenue Baptist Church. She loves to make biscuits on Sunday morning. She is a loyal member of the choir on Sunday and helps people that have funerals at the church. She loves to help the young people serve them food to eat. She is dedicated to her church people. I'm so proud of her ambition. She never gives up at church. One day I would like to be like my mother, be ambitious, never stop working for the Lord. My mother knows about Jesus in her life.

-Martha Freeman



LENDING A HELPING HAND

Somebody who helps me is my tutor. She helps me with my reading and writing. She is a very nice teacher. Her name is Tracey Jarmon. Also my best friend gives me a hand on Mondays.

-John Patrick



I like to help people because somebody helped me when I was living on the street. This person is important to me because he helped me when I needed it. He fed me when I needed to eat.

-Reginald Mitchell



Ms. Marvo

The woman I am writing about is my case manager Ms. Marvo, because she is the one who inspired me. I have known her since August 2009. I was homeless and I found the House of Ruth. Ms. Marvo works at the House of Ruth. She helps me with all my appointments and problems. Ms. Marvo taught me to speak and say what's on my mind without hurting no one's feelings, just by helping everyone I can. She talks to me and I feel good about myself. She helps me to be independent and take the bus on my own, and go to school.

Ms. Marvo is a very nice person. I think that she will help any woman who needs help in the community. One time I had a heart attack at the House of Ruth and they took me to the hospital. When I was released back to the House of Ruth, she sent me to a very good hospital in Northwest. The people there were very nice and helpful. I love her for doing that for me and helping me to learn all I can learn and always do my best.

-Geraldine Green





-Kim Jackson

My kids have been so helpful to me and they keep me up on my feet and on the right track. I hope to be around to see them grow up to help other people. I never really helped someone like they helped me, but there is someone helping me and my kids and that's a good thing; but my family don't agree. It's okay because no he's a good friend to me and my kids; if only I had more friends like him. I also have another friend that also has been so helpful to me and my kids, and she tell me to stop playing around and get on my game plan and stay focus. So having someone that you can depend on and support you in life is always a blessing.

-Juliette Rowland

This is the story of a person that have inspired me and helped me. This person's name is Debra Brown. She has inspired me to stay in school and to get my education. She helped me with some studying, learning how to pronounce words, also talked to me and explained the meaning of words and she do it with kindness, love and a cheerful smile and patience much patience. She helps me out with bills, letters, and also Sunday School lessons, and when she helps me it is with joy and with that inspiration from her that inspires me, Juliette to keep going and just wanting to progress and get better in my reading and writing skills. I want to reach the top and know for sure that I have achieved my goal.

-Janet Daniels

My teacher helps me with my reading. School is good for me. I helped Venite take care of business. She is in my class. I come here by bus. My sister Cookie fights me. I don't like it. She is selfish. But I love her so much. My other sister Pat has bad ways and I don't like it. They need to love me as much as I love them. I need to take them to church with me to pray. Hallelujah. My brother was incarcerated but he is doing very good.

I attend Assumption Catholic Church in SE Washington. I try to give my children a strong spiritual background, hopefully to follow them throughout their life. My children and I volunteer time working with the Sisters at the Missionary of Charities on Wheeler Road, SE. The Mission helps pregnant young mothers, and feed homeless people two hot meals and a snack each day. We help the children with their homework, play games with them, and just plain talk to them about whatever they want to talk about.

-Earline Simmons



I like to help other people.
I like other people to help me too.

When I was in school I all ways went to be in the real class like the other students. But I had to know that I was not a fast learn as another students. But my family member was all ways there to help suport me. And this class that I am in now I know it is a very good class for me.

-Michael Tonic



The Famous Person in my Life

There are several people in my life which I consider famous to me. One is my mother. Another is Mr. Oliver Johnson, who is retired from the Federal Government. I want to write about him. He has been working with me for several months. He helps me with my reading and math. He is a wonderful person in his church and the community. He makes me laugh with his encouragement in a funny way. Mr. Johnson is important to me because he cares about me and my progress in my studies. My mother is somebody who understands my goals. She is always helping me with her guidance. I am very fortunate to have these people in my life. These two people are famous in my eyes.

-Fernando Rodriguez



My teacher helps me to read every day at school.
The school want me to do my home work at home.
I am learning to read.
Life is good.

My family helps me too.
School want me to think.

-Hiawatha Evans



Tom Moore is a drug counselor at the day program I'm going to now. He helped me get in Tony's House, a transitional house. Tom saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Tom inspired me to have courage to stay clean. Now I'm coming up on one year. Tom was the first person to inspire me and encourage me.

-Sherone Johnson



Thanks to a Wonderful Teacher

I can not thank you enough for being a good teacher. All the hard work you are doing planning, producing, presenting, telling about this newspaper with so much information in it. If we can't get our GED or high school diploma with the subjects you are teaching I will say if I die and my soul be lost, its nobody fault but mine, because my mother taught me how to pray. My teacher is teaching. I know I can't get it all but I'm trying to learn as much as I can, gracious, thankful, May God Bless and keep you.

-Ozella Stokes



OUR STORIES

The Happy Hippie Gets Housing
(originally published in Street Sense, March 3 2010)

It's been a long road, but the happy hippie got his housing. The road was so long: I was with Street Sense when I first started, and Street Sense helped me to get my life back together. By God's grace, I got my housing.

Sometimes we have to wait a long time for the things we want. We have to be patient. I was at 801 East Shelter for two years and three months before Veterans Affairs finally gave me my apartment. When I got discouraged, I still kept my faith and my patience. Sometimes people don't want to wait for stuff, they want to move on. But if you keep faith in God, He will be your strength to keep on.

Since I moved into my new place, everything seems different. Now I can focus more on school, more on other things I've wanted to do. But I got to remember to take it one day at a time. I can't rush. On May 27th I will be seven years clean. The AA program did a lot to help keep me focused. I also talked to a lot of people who gave me strength to go on—you can't do this thing alone. You always got to have someone to give you strength and I had a friend: she gave me heart, love, and strength too and told me "never give up." I never did, because I always had the faith.

I ask God why sometimes things are so hard, but I know He does things in His time. So we all have to be patient, even when we don't want to. At the end of it, I'm blessed for today but I don't know what tomorrow will bring.

In 1997 was the first time I met Dana. She was a teacher's aid at Calvin Coolidge Senior High School. She was good at her job. When I did not want to do my work she made me do it. If I didn't do the work she would sit until it was done. Eleven years later we became good friends. Not only she was a friend she was like a second mom to me. When my mom passed away she was there for me. When I needed help filling out paperwork she helped me out. In 2004 Dana became my daughter's godmother. She would watch her if I needed her to. When she got sick and was in and out of the hospital I went to see you every chance I get. There was times when I would come and see you I would tell you I didn't have enough money you would tell me to come on I will get you back home. You always keep a promise. Dana it's my turn to take care of you so you get better. I love you and we miss you.

Love: Katrease, Kelli and Reuben

-Kelli Bell

Some times I cry becaues I feel alone on this earth people tell me not to lat my desblity get in the way of liveing. It tuch my hart when my sister sad to my mom if she die she will help me with my bills. I lost my cusn end of last year and grandma beginning of this year. Im still hurt that I lost my second mom wich is my grand ma 1995. Two years ago I had sugrie to caoud have tock my life. I'm thankful for frinds.

-Michael McCauley



Hello everybody I am Rodney Glenn Higgins. I am writing the good best story of Rodney Glenn Higgins is nice good person. He love to help out good nice people. That is Rodney love to do that because that is my heart because I do care all lot of good nice people. I do because I am the nice good person to be round with. I will help because I do care about nice people. I want somebody to care about Rodney Glenn Higgins lot, because he alone in this world he living. Now he want to find a new right good friend I never have before. I am the nice man to be round with. I want somebody to talk too. I am like to be alone all the time. I want someone to help Rodney Glenn Higgins to find a new good best friend. He need one. I want to go out more to have fun again because I never have fun before.

-Rodney Glenn Higgins



International Day

One Sunday we were in church getting ready for International Day. We were told stand by our country's flag. Most of the people are from other countries, I was the one with the U.S. flag. The people from the other countries brought their children over to me and went back to stand by there country flag. I was standing up front with all these children who are U.S. citizens. I was told that I had to get them ready for International Day. I told them go on you tube and learn the National Anthem, from Beyonce or Whitney Houston. On International Day all the children were singing the National Anthem. It was at that time I learned that I was not the only American in the church. Thank God.

-Mrs. C. S. Gary



The story of my life

I got hit by a car when I was little girls. I lost half of my memory. I stuttered a lot. I repeat what everyone said. When I was in school I was in a special ed class. I was slow learning to read.

-LeKeisha Price



Re-Enslavement Revisited

As I stood in front of the art exhibit, I found it too moving and difficult to take in emotionally. The artist did not limit himself to just bold color, he arranged pictures, words and objects to express the black man's world enslaved. President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Today the black man faces economic enslavement in the work force.

I want to read my mail.
The newspaper.
The Bible
And do my job better.

I want to take control of my
Life.



-Ernest Barnes



My goals are to get a job also my GED. The most important person in my life is my sister. She also encourages me to do my best at everything I do and also become successful and stay positive. I also believe do my best and rest is easy.

-Sheila Owens



Courage

I am 45 yrs old and been fighting most of my life. I even had to fight for my brother when he got in trouble. But the biggest fight I am fighting is education, which I am determined to get. GED, etc. I would like too, write a book about my life. I believe it would touch a lot of

people and to encourage them not to give up the fight. I had many people trying to stop me from going to school even myself. Now I am in a place that give me dreams, hope, vision and a purpose in life. I am married now. He encourage me to keep going even when my body mind or just being lazy say stop. I have not giving up on the vision because I know one day I will have this.

-Suzanne



The Life of Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong was a poor boy who loved to sing and play music. He would go on the street corner looking for someone. He could sing too, which made people very happy. So that is just what he did. Some time people would give him a few pennies for himself.

He was happy. He could buy some instrument, because that is what he loved most of all: to make someone happy. He didn't have very much, but that didn't stop him at all. He just kept on singing and playing whatever he could find to play. Louis' mother was poor, but she supported her family. It was not easy. Louis had friends who were right by his side and that made him happy doing what he loved to do best, singing and playing. Louis loved people and he had friends all over the world. He became a famous man.



-Mae Johnson



My mother was everything to me. She was a lovely person. We had our ups and downs but we always stuck together like we were sisters. She helped me with my boys and helped keep a roof over my head.

Coming to LVA has helped me feel better about myself. My sons and my step father are proud of me and I'm proud of myself. I am sticking with it, and thank the Lord for helping me got through it everyday.

I like to help other people and teach my son to help other people. I am thankful for all of the people who have helped me and encouraged me along the way and my boss.

-Nancy West

Four People in My Life

Jesus Christ is first, he is there all the time. He has helped me through praying, going to the right church, Refuge Temple Church, and the love of the Saints. In Sunday school I read the word.

My sister, Sheila, has helped me with my needs—money, a place to stay, encouragement. She says to me “you can make it.” She always showed me her love and showed me that she understands the hurt in my life.

My son, Kevin, has seen my hurt and disappointment. My brother kicked me out and my son said, “Mama, it is going to be all right.” He is an inspiration to me. He is willing to help me and told me, “I know you can do it.”

What motivated me is that I want to make a change in my life, through the help of these other people. I want to read Cinderella to my granddaughter, Amaya. I can tell her stories, but I want to read her a book. I want to get my driver's license, my GED, and start a daycare business, and get my own car and my own house. I want to help people because I have had help from people.

-Juliette Rowland

Thankful

I'm so thankful to have had the opportunity to go to Brookland school to read to the children on Dr. Seuss' Birthday, The Read Across America Day. The directions, Teachers introduce me. My name was the first volunteer on the program. Everyone was kind, taking my picture. Mrs. Daniels came and gave me a big hug. I felt favorable, acceptable, appreciative, thankful all in one. They made me feel as if I was a Howard University student.

The book I read was about the little black girl in Mississippi, going to an all white school. She and her teacher were the only one in her

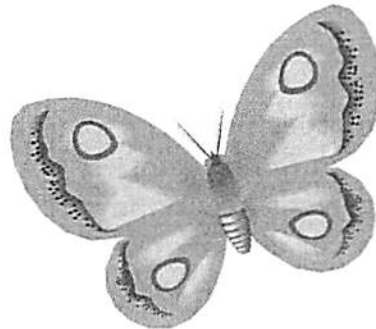
room because the white people kept their children home. The marshals had to guard her. When she went out side in the hallway, she would be moving her mouth, and her teacher said, "I told you not to talk to any one." She told her teacher, "I was not talking to anyone. I was praying for all those people that wanted to harm me." Her teacher was afraid for her, but she wasn't afraid.

-Ozella Stokes

The story of my life

I got hit by a car when I was little girls. I lost half of my memory. I stuttered a lot. I repeat what everyone said. When I was in school I was in a special ed class. I was slow learning to read.

-LeKeisha Price





Acknowledgements

On behalf of LVA, I would like to recognize the many individuals without whom this collection would not have been published.

To our adult learners-

I want to thank you for sharing your wonderful stories with us. We appreciate the enormous effort you put into your submissions and the commitment to learning that you show every week.

To the staff at LVA-

Thank you for your wholehearted commitment to ensure success for the learners, and for all your work in producing this book.

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-Rita Daniels,
Executive Director



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