

# NEWS RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

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### **Literacy Volunteers of Bangor**

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## **Bangor Literacy Volunteers Grow Seven Fold in Two Years**

Seven times as many Bangor-area residents this year versus two years ago are volunteering to help their neighbors improve their literacy. That was one of the startling accomplishments announced Tuesday night at the annual meeting of Literacy Volunteers of Bangor (LV-Bangor), which trains and matches tutors with eager adult learners. Maine recently ranked 16th nationwide in rate of volunteering, with just under a third of its citizens donating their time for worthy causes. The recent expansion of LV-Bangor is a prime example of Mainers' willingness to lend a hand.

One-hundred fourteen adult students are improving their reading, writing and English-speaking skills working one-on-one with volunteer tutors furnished by LV-Bangor. Several of them addressed the gathering of 108 students, tutors and other volunteers Tuesday night, thanking their tutors and showing off their new reading skills. Steve Scalse, who has improved his reading skills by two grade levels since coming to the program, said he turned to LV-Bangor because he was tired of living "in a rut" of illiteracy. He urged his fellow students to "keep their goals, keep strong."

In recent years, LV-Bangor has been assisting more and more speakers of languages other than English. This internationalism was reflected in a meeting hall on Tuesday adorned with foreign flags (beside the Stars and Stripes), and a buffet dinner featuring—alongside American staples—sushi, Korean pancakes, and a kind of pizza from the Republic of Georgia. One tutor performed a graceful flamenco dance (accompanied by her father on guitar).

Lina Chen from China and her tutor, Elizabeth Cherneski, made a joint presentation (frequently upstaged by Jessica, Lina's exuberant young daughter in arms), stressing the close relationship that develops between student and teacher. Though only working with her since February, Elizabeth said she felt she'd known Lina a lifetime. "We have fun,"

they read together from the lectern. “It doesn’t seem like hard work at all. We’re learning a lot from each other.”

In addition to the huge jump in number of students served, the last two years has also seen a big improvement in LV-Bangor’s finances—going from scrimping for postage to investing surpluses.

Among other awards, 26 tutors were recognized for contributing over 100 hours to the program. The meeting also elected Kim Whitmore, Newspapers in Education Manager at the *Bangor Daily News* to succeed Allison Cote as president of the organization. Kristen VanDusen, Susan Hatch, and Ian Prior were also elected to the 15-member board.

LV-Bangor links trained, volunteer tutors with adults who want to learn or improve their reading and English-speaking skills. Low literacy makes comprehending daily activities challenging, if not impossible, for many adults. Those interested in supporting literacy efforts can call 947-8451.

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