

BRIDGING THE VISION



with Dr. Kate Daly Rolander

Welcome to the winter 2023 issue of **PROGRESS!** In recognition of the VALRC’s irreplaceable Page Stirrup and other supportive staff around the state who support the work of adult education, we dedicate this issue of **PROGRESS** to the people who are often behind the scenes and without whom we could not open our doors (or our virtual classes).

This issue of **PROGRESS** celebrates the individuals who hold us up and who make things happen, oftentimes in the background. These unsung heroes work hard, do great work, and commit their time and talent to support the field of adult education. They make our jobs easier to do, and without them, we would likely struggle to have the materials we need for instruction, to connect as a field at meetings and conferences, to figure out how to access that course on Canvas, or to make sure everyone knows exactly where to park and not get towed at the off-site meeting. They connect our students to resources, they make sure instructors have the information and the resources they need, they answer endless phone calls and emails, and they’re often the first people in or the last people out at the end of the day. Because their work is often out of the public eye, it’s easy to take for granted all of the time and effort that goes into making the complex work of adult education happen.

Many roles, skills, and tasks go into making adult education programs run. In addition to instructors and program leadership, there are the indispensable administrative staff, enrollment specialists, finance managers, coordinators, instructional aides, student liaisons, data specialists, volunteers, tutors, translators, career coaches, case workers, counselors, FastForward coaches, interpreters, translators, IT support, community and partner supporters, student leaders, and countless others who hold us up.

This issue showcases 14 of our colleagues and the many ways they shoulder the work of adult education around the state. Read on to learn more about their roles and how important their work is, as shared by those closest to them. Let us take this opportunity to reflect and show appreciation to our unsung heroes.

Who holds up your work?

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PROGRESS

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As many of you may know, the VALRC lost a valued member of our team last year, and we dedicate this issue of **PROGRESS** to her and to her colleagues in the field of adult education who support us and make things work.

As the VALRC Registration and Support Coordinator, Page played an essential role with her support on our main phone lines, at our in-person events, and in helping instructors access our online courses. She was often the bridge that connected instructors and program managers in the field to our work at the VALRC. She was the friendly voice that most people first heard when they called our office. She was our woman-at-the-table at our in-person events, and she got to know many of the instructors, managers, state staff, and vendors as friends.

She was a good listener and always had time to lend a hand. She always exhibited unending patience in helping those who were new to our online offerings navigate Blackboard and then Canvas, even talking some callers through their first times accessing a new browser. As specialists, we depended on Page to help us fill our folders for our in-person trainings, to order the supplies we needed, to make sure we had our calendars, and she always kept her desk full of the best candy.

Her personal touch made a difference to a lot of people. Whenever I would bring my daughter into the office, Page would welcome her with a light-up sword or a plastic wand or some other unexpected treat she got from one of the promotional swag companies who sent samples. With Page, it was the little things, and she took the time with all of us to do those little things that make such big impacts. 



Dr. Kate Daly Rolander is the Director of Literacy Programming and Workforce Education Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). She leads the team of educational specialists in carrying out the VALRC mission of equipping the field of adult education and literacy with essential skills and resources through an equity mindset. In addition, Kate also supports Virginia's development and implementation of career pathways programs, assists instructors and staff in tailoring instruction for workforce readiness, and coordinates the state's PluggedInVA programs.



Honoring our Unsung Heroes

**There's always someone
running the lights in the
background,
and when the light's on
you
they're the ones to thank
that we never ever do.
So here's to you,
all of you.
You're the unsung heroes
of life,
you all make things
happen
so let's pay some credit,
since a long time it's
been due.
This poem my heroes,
this is for you.**

- David Thomas



Michelle Wassam

Administrative Assistant/
Data Specialist

Northern Shenandoah
Valley Adult Education
([NSVAE](#))

Region 7



Michelle Wassam joined the Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education Adult Education Program (NSVAE) in 2012. She serves as the program’s admin assistant, purchasing agent, and data specialist. Michelle comes to work ready to help people—staff, teachers, students. She balances knowledge of program needs and policies with what will be most helpful to the individual she is serving. Michelle serves everyone she contacts with respect and dignity. She is patient as she helps direct students to the class most appropriate for them. As a proud GED® recipient, she is often able to give a meaningful pep talk and strong reality check, along with encouragement, to adult students. She is patient with instructors each and every time she has to review data or help them make corrections. She is always willing to support her colleagues.

Michelle LOVES data. She likes to say that spreadsheets “make her happy.” She has developed several programs to improve NSVAE’s real-time data collection and registration processes. She has served on the state’s *Data Professional Learning Community (PLC)* since 2020 and has also served as a subject matter expert for the *Data System Procurement Committee*. She strives for accuracy and expects the same level of detail from all instructors.

She is instrumental in analyzing data to

make sound programming decisions. Michelle is a vital member of NSVAE’s Leadership Team. Regional Manager Sharon Hetland says, “Michelle is respected by every member of our program. She is serious about her work, but she has a great personality and sense of humor that is so helpful when things get stressful.”

Michelle loves to fill her spare time with her three grandchildren, knitting, designing, building, cooking, and raising chickens. She plans to start her first apiary this spring. Michelle is passionate about adult ed and understands the difference it makes in students’ lives. ▲



Jonelle Howard

Instructional Aide

Shenandoah Initiative
for Adult Education

([SHINE](#)),

Building Blocks

Region 6

Caring and dependable, instructional aide Jonelle Howard brings enthusiasm to her work at Waynesboro's Building Blocks Adult Education Program, helping HSE, NEDP, and English language learners. "Jonelle often knows what you need before you do," says regional manager Katy Parrish. "As a result, things are completed before you need to ask. She replies to all crazy text questions regardless of the time and is always available at a moment's notice to help out."

Jonelle is a hard worker even as she lives with a serious health disability. She is a great role model of strength and resilience. Jonelle is a proud mother of 3 daughters and is content with how she has helped guide them through their education. Jonelle enjoys cooking, dancing, and reading when she gets the chance.

Jonelle began working for Waynesboro Public Schools, Adult Education in 2008. She is pleased to know that she is the first person students see as they walk in, as well as the first person they speak with over the phone. Jonelle goes out of her way to help students with anything and will often meet students to pre- and post-test when it is convenient for them. Jonelle is concerned about everyone personally, not just professionally. She is a good listener and friend. Jonelle works to make herself accessible to all the teachers and students in the programs so

they know she can be depended upon no matter the situation. 

Jason Bruffey

IT Support

Middle Peninsula
Regional Adult Career
Education ([R.A.C.E.](#))

Region 18



Thanks to Jason Bruffey, King William County Public Schools Director of Technology, the Middle Peninsula R.A.C.E. program has been well served in the areas of technology and IT support. “We often hear of the challenges other programs have accessing technology through various fiscal agents,” says retired regional manager Danielle Robinson (also pictured), but Jason Bruffey and his team have always been available to help the adult education program. “The needs of the adult education program have never been treated as less than equal on their priority list. In addition, Jason reviews our need for technology, gets quotes, and makes purchases within our budget to meet both program and student needs.”

Jason began his career as an elementary school teacher, teaching kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. After finishing his associate’s degree in Internet applications in 2013, he switched career paths to best utilize both his education skills and experience in addition to his true love and passion for education and operational technology. Jason worked as a Technology Support Technician and Data Integration Specialist for Henrico County Public Schools from 2013 until November 2019, when he became the Director of Technology for King William County Public Schools. “I love what I do!” says Jason. “In this role, we are here to support our customers, which is our students, staff, and the community. Customer Service and teamwork is key to our success and something I keep in high

regard with my role as director. Working in a smaller division truly gives me the ability to be hands-on in the work being done, but, more importantly, I get to meet with so many people and assist with filling the instructional technology needs that can lead to success in and out of the classroom.”

Kind, soft-spoken, and attentive to all, Jason Bruffey is aware of the differences between K-12 and adult learners and accommodates adult education as much as possible. He is readily available to troubleshoot problems outside of K-12 hours and has even travelled to instruction sites outside of King William County to help update computers, download software, and negotiate access through firewalls and other challenges with collaborating partners. Jason and his team are very patient and understand the challenges of the Middle Peninsula R.A.C.E.’s complete dependence on a part-time instruction team. Jason is committed to equity of access, which he regularly demonstrates in his response to the needs of adult students. His responsiveness, professionalism, knowledge, and willingness to learn have made Jason Bruffey very effective in the role of IT program support.

Jason holds a B.S. in sociology; an M.Ed. with a focus primary education from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, and a business associate’s degree with a concentration on Internet applications (web design). 



Sharon Harvey

Fiscal Agent/GED®
Assessor

New River Community
College, Office of
Transitional Programs
([NRCC](#))
Region 4

// Sharon Harvey is just the best!" says regional manager Diane Gray. Sharon has been with adult education at New River Community College for more than 30 years, bringing a great attention to detail and compassion for others. Sharon Harvey started working in adult education for New River Community College in 1993 as a Secretary Senior and, after ten years, took on her current position as Adult Education Financial Specialist/GED® Assessor.

Accuracy is at the top of Sharon's list in all that she does. She works closely with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to ensure all reimbursements and reports are sent in a timely manner. She assists in all interviewing processes and grant writing sessions, and is a very important part of the continuous improvement team. Sharon is helpful, kind, and a great encourager of others. She is a tremendous asset to the program. 🌱

Eyglo Jones

Department
Bookkeeper

Chesapeake Public
Schools, [Department
of Adult and
Continuing Education](#)
Region 20



At Chesapeake Public Schools (CPS) Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Eyglo Jones consistently offers knowledge, organization, student support, and community outreach—constantly going above and beyond her assigned duties to assure that students and staff alike meet with success. She is the senior staff member who provides support to all those who serve adult students.

“Eyglo is the core of our department,” says local manager Fontaine Ferebee-Johns. “Eyglo is the staff member that has an eye for recognizing when things need improvement, and she moves forward with initiating what needs to be done.” She is dependable, consistent, kind, knowledgeable, passionate, and compassionate.

Eyglo Jones, an Icelandic native, hails from a very large family. She arrived in Hampton Roads in 1989 as a military wife and was able to secure employment immediately with a local insurance office. Realizing that her passion centered around helping those in need, Eyglo transferred her office skills to the Chesapeake Health Department, working for an outreach program where she had the opportunity to assist and get to know people from diverse backgrounds and in various circumstances.

Eyglo always had Chesapeake Public Schools on her bucket list of places she wanted to work,

and her wish was fulfilled in 2000. Her first assignment with Chesapeake Public Schools was working as a secretary through the Career and Technical Education Department for a grant program called Career Assessments. Eyglo worked with Career Assessments for approximately three years before becoming an account clerk with the Adult and Continuing Education Department. In her own words, she describes working with adult education as “a wealth of experiences, where I have gained so much knowledge while interacting with the student/staff population. Twenty-three years beyond having my bucket list item checked, I still enjoy my job at adult education where there is never a dull moment.”

Eyglo is the mother of three adult children and the grandmother of two. She resides in Suffolk, Virginia, and she continues to bring a wealth of knowledge to Chesapeake Adult Education. 🌱



Cindy Campbell

Instructional Specialist

Mount Rogers
Regional Adult
Education Program

Region 3

Cindy Campbell retired from Smyth County Public School and decided that she was not quite ready to retire full time—so she joined the office team at Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program’s (MRRRAEP) Abingdon office. Cindy regularly goes above-and-beyond in her instructional specialist duties. She is always finding great resources for the MRRRAEP instructors. She keeps the instructors’ manual up-to-date and has digitized many of the paper forms. She has created videos and simplified the paperwork educators must complete. Not only does she create lesson resources for instructors, she also substitute teaches when instructors cannot make it in for various reasons. This year, she is offering a course for helping adult learners with tutoring. She is humble, kind, and willing to help all throughout the day and evening.

Cindy truly enjoys working with the MRRRAEP office staff and instructors, and her colleagues describe her as “a pleasure to work with.” Her attentiveness to details and her organization skills help her make the MMRAEP program stronger. As an instructional specialist, Cindy brings valuable resources to teacher in-services. For example, she has invited guest speakers to help clarify matters for testing.

“I am nominating Cindy because she never asks

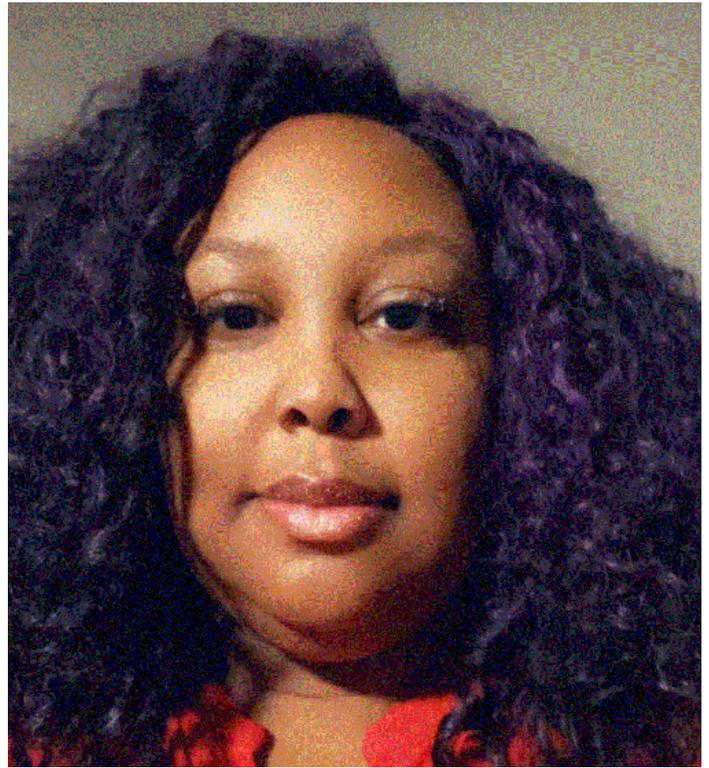
for credit,” says fellow instructional specialist Lorraine Hedgepeth. “When she does things—whether it is finding an instructional resource, teaching a class, or giving valuable advice to students and instructors—she is humble and direct. This gives great balance when you want the adult learner to continue learning and the instructor to continue instructing.”

Cindy lives in Marion, Virginia, with her husband Kelly. 📍

ShaQuantia Smith

Student Service
Associate

Richmond Public
Schools, [Capital
Region Adult
Education Program](#)
Region 15



ShaQuantia Smith is a Henrico County native and graduate of Henrico High School's Center for the Arts. In 2020, she graduated summa cum laude from Walden University with a bachelor's degree in business administration. ShaQuantia's Richmond Public Schools Adult Education journey began in 2019 as a test proctor. In 2020, she transitioned from test proctoring into program registration. During the COVID pandemic, her work with online registration and assessment has been essential. ShaQuantia brings to her job excellent customer service and interpersonal skills, ambition, commitment, and a focus on efficiency. She is passionate about the work of adult education. She is always looking for ways to improve operations and the student experience.

ShaQuantia is the first point of contact as it pertains to students and registration and plays a critical role at every stage of the program. She assists with determining registration dates, times, and locations. She calls students to schedule registration and she calls the students back the day before registration to confirm their appointment. She makes sure teachers have class rosters and assessment testing information prior to classes starting. She is the liaison between the instructors and the students. She assists student with the GED® Ready and Official GED® Test. If a student doesn't have an email address or GED® Ready log in, she will

take the time to assist the student. She also makes sure class and teacher surveys are submitted at the end of the semester. If a staff member is absent, she fills in where necessary, whether that be with the Pearson VUE Testing Center or as office associate. She ensures flyers and advertisements are emailed to partners and she helps with preparations for, and participates in, graduation.

ShaQuantia has dedicated herself to promoting positive social change in her community. In 2019, she served on the Henrico County Public School rezoning committee as the representative for Elko Middle School. She has played a key role as a Ward Elementary School PTA Board Member since 2018 and actively volunteers with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). ShaQuantia has served in numerous positions with the BSA's Heart of Virginia Council since 2017. A wife and a mother of four, she also relishes travel with friends and family. In her spare time, ShaQuantia enjoys various arts and crafts. In the future, she plans to use her knowledge and skills to help small businesses succeed. 📍



Brenda Otey

Finance/Office Manager

Mount Rogers
Regional Adult
Education Program

Region 3

Detail-oriented, tech savvy, and perpetually positive, Brenda Otey is committed to providing excellent service to the Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program (MRRRAEP) students, instructors, and program staff. Brenda joined MRRRAEP in 2011 as the data specialist and currently serves as the Office/Finance Manager. She is the point person for payroll, budgets, and inquiries from potential students. Brenda is often the first voice new students hear when calling into the office and has an excellent way of putting their minds at ease and motivating them to attend class.

“Brenda is the unsung hero of our program,” says regional specialist Cindy Campbell. “In addition to all the duties she has as the Finance Manager, she also serves as the sympathetic ear and cheerleader. She is always available to teachers to make sure they have exactly what they need. When a student stops by the office, it is often Brenda who listens to and encourages them. She always makes time to help anyone and constantly inspires those around her!”

Brenda has a great work ethic but also understands the importance of balancing work and personal life. She draws on her strong faith as well as a deep belief in the positive impact adult education has in the community. Recently, Brenda has played an essential role in the transition between regional managers. “My role as program manager has been easier to navigate due to the willingness

from Brenda to take the time from her busy schedule to help me learn the responsibilities and the duties that are so important to our program,” says regional manager Shannon Mutter. “Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program is very blessed to have Brenda as our finance and office manager but most of all as our number one cheerleader !”

Brenda was born and raised in Damascus, Virginia, and currently lives in Bristol, Virginia, with her husband Danny and six-year-old daughter Brooklyn.



Maris Laney

Program support for three, new, pilot ESL classes

ReEstablish Richmond Region 15



Maris Laney is an AmeriCorps Volunteer who walked into a new project and immediately got it organized, with a smile, grace, and professionalism. When ReEstablish Richmond piloted three new English classes—on two days, in two locations, at three times of day—for the first time, Maris coordinated schedules, collected important information about each refugee or immigrant student, and handled all situations and questions. She created detailed spreadsheets with intake data as well as attendance, assessment scores, and more. In addition to her organizational and technology skills, Maris brings a sense of calmness to her work. “We all marveled at her competence with a brand new job and program,” says ReEstablish Richmond’s Nancy Riddlemose.

Maris is a recent graduate from Auburn University, with a B.S. in global studies and minors in sustainability and Spanish. Passionate about environmentally and socially safe spaces, she is committed to the improvement of quality of life for all individuals. Maris’ passion for serving displaced peoples comes particularly from her grandmother’s shared experiences as a displaced child during WWII, having survived the bombing of her home and community. As an AmeriCorps member offering capacity building support across ReEstablish Richmond’s economic empowerment programming, Maris serves as the logistics coordinator of ReEstablish Richmond’s pilot English classes. 🌱

Ande Niedermayer

Enrollment and Data Specialist

Thomas Jefferson
Adult Career Education
at Piedmont Virginia
Community College
(TJACE@PVCC)

Region 10



Ande Niedermayer joined TJACE in spring 2022 just as they were undergoing a Virginia Department of Education monitoring visit and audit. “Talk about learning under pressure!” says regional manager Carol Coffey. “Ande jumped right in to do anything she could to help us review our data. Most importantly, she prioritized learning about and serving our students with patience and compassion. She immediately created tools for better communication with our many ELLs. She used her expertise with the college’s registration systems to create improved enrollment procedures for our students.”

Ande is customer-focused, flexible, and dedicated to the adult education mission. As she has become more familiar with adult ed, [SSWS](#), and [NRS](#), she constantly looks for process improvement opportunities while collecting and reporting data for excellence in programming. She works with TJACE’s assessment and advising team to coordinate pre- and post-assessments and enrollments. Teachers depend on Ande for rosters and attendance data. She is the first contact for most prospective and current students and the communications coordinator for the TJACE 35-member Team. “Ande is at the hub of our TJACE wheel,” says Carol. “Always good-natured and willing to do whatever is needed for however long it takes, Ande is a valued gem!”

Ande enjoys spending time with her

extended family of three grown children, their wonderful significant others, one grandson, and two cats (along with grand puppies) and hopes to add a new dog to the mix. A lifelong resident of Charlottesville, Ande’s path before joining TJACE has included not only several jobs, but also several professions! She has worked in the hospitality industry in catering and wedding planning, and she sold real estate, where she learned the best picnic spots in Albemarle and the surrounding counties. She was part of the Mountainwood community, a treatment center helping those with chemical dependencies, and worked at the Covenant School for seven years. She assisted Ken Farmer in running his Charlottesville Auction House and operated her own business, “The Feathered Nest,” offering antiques and collectibles to those with a discerning eye. Ande also spent four years working with the Workforce Services division at Piedmont Virginia Community College, which made for a wonderful segue to her position with The Adult Learning Center/TJACE@PVCC. Of her current role, Ande says, “I have the great fortune of working with the most giving group of humans ever! Every day, as I watch this team give of themselves selflessly to this community of learners, I am humbled.” 🌍

Layma Sammar

ESL Tutor, Translator,
Family Literacy Support

[Peninsula Regional
Education Program](#)

Region 21



Layma Sammar came to the Peninsula Regional Education Program (PREP) in February 2021 as a translator to help the Afghan community. Initially, she agreed to come every Tuesday and Thursday, when PREP's Catholic Charities partner sent their students to PREP's building to meet their tutor. Layma was immediately able to work one-on-one with the beginning ESL learners who needed the most support. An Afghan American who received her degree in Spanish literature while in Kabul, Layma worked in fall 2021 as a translator with the United States Marines in Stafford, Virginia and has since served as a Dari translator with Commonwealth Catholic Charities. Layma leverages her own experiences as an Afghan woman who became a U.S. citizen along with her translation skills and great customer service skills to support English language learners.

Layma has been willing to do anything PREP leadership has asked of her. When PREP began to plan a family literacy grant, Layma was eager to go through the training so that she could help support the ESL adults who would take part. When the program lost its coordinator to a full-time job, Layma stepped up to lead the family literacy grant and move forward with recruitment. "We have had our challenges with getting the family lit program off the ground, but Layma has not given up," says PREP manager Rachel Ambrose. "Layma has been with

PREP for a short amount of time and has had a huge impact on our program and our students."

Layma currently teaches ESOL basic levels and leads the Peninsula Regional Education Program's family literacy program. [▲](#)



Marizol Rojas

Office Administrator and
Student Liaison

English Empowerment
Center, formerly the
Literacy Council of
Northern Virginia
Region 8

Marizol Rojas is a touchstone for adult learners at the English Empowerment Center. "Marizol is the first person our students, partners, and volunteers engage with, and she never fails to offer a great first impression," says Director of Academic Programs and Student Services Xavier Muñoz. "Whether a student is taking class at a faraway site or at our home-location, odds are that they have talked to Marizol on the phone about our classes and that they have become fast friends. It seems like most of our 1500 students know Marizol and refer to her by name. They come into the office just to see and talk to her about classes, their families, and their future plans. What is more, they talk to her after they have moved on to other programs to let her know how they are doing and share how they progressed."

Marizol is the go-to person for anyone who needs help. Her support for the English Empowerment Center's online registration process is crucial. Many students ask for her personally to get assistance with the online registration process and she has a way to connect to students even if she has never met them in person.

Marizol is one of the hardest working people you will ever meet. She keeps a mental map of where all our supplies, materials, and current information

can be found for staff and instructors. She tirelessly works to improve our offices and classrooms. For example, she creates a warm and welcoming environment for everyone with a constant repertoire of seasonal decorations and treats. Whether it is moving large cabinets by herself when no one else is around, bringing in beautiful potted plants to adorn the office, or putting hand-made crafts around the office to brighten people's days, she is constantly finding ways to create a cheerful home-office for all.

Marizol is deeply respectful and extremely supportive and helpful to every person that calls or comes into our offices. The warmth and kindness that she exudes makes everyone feel at home and welcome at the English Empowerment Center. Most of the people we serve are new to this country, many are refugees. They are nervous, unsure and many are afraid, but Marizol creates an atmosphere both physically in the office and with her kind demeanor that allows them to feel safe and confident that they are in the right place.

Marizol is from Bolivia and understands the hardships of those who come to this country. Upon arrival, she wanted to make the most of her opportunity to thrive here and was a participant in and graduate from Training Futures, a longtime

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partner of the English Empowerment Center. It is a nationally recognized workforce development program providing training for living-wage professional careers. It offers an innovative curriculum in a simulated office environment with two primary goals: to help underemployed and unemployed adults secure professional careers with potential for advancement, and to meet the needs of local employers who seek qualified, entry-level workers.

Marizol understands the importance of English Empowerment Center's mission of teaching English to those with the most urgent language needs, knowing how it empowers individuals to improve their lives and their families' lives. She says she is "very excited to be part of the team and to work for an organization that provides educational advancement to the community." With compassion and empathy, Marizol creates strong connections with the individuals the English Empowerment Center serves and shows them that their aspirations are achievable.

Outside of work, Marizol enjoys gardening, crafting, scary movies, and spending time with her husband and three children. 🌱

Amy Tristan

Volunteer & Outreach
Manager

[English Empowerment Center](#), formerly the
Literacy Council of
Northern Virginia
Region 8

Amy Tristan works with more than 500 volunteers who give over 20,000 hours of service annually to help the English Empowerment Center run smoothly. Because of these volunteers, the center is able to serve 1,500 adult learners each year. Many teachers, all of the more than 130 class aides, and all of the center's tutors and student advisors are volunteers. Amy works tirelessly to find volunteers in the Northern Virginia community who are skilled, energetic, and dedicated to the mission of empowering adult learners and their families. Amy aids in recruiting learners and sharing information about academic programs, and she mobilizes teams of volunteers (many of whom are multilingual) to attend community gatherings, back-to-school fairs, and other events.

Amy has an impressive knowledge of the different volunteer needs and duties for each department of the English Empowerment Center. Even more impressive is her personal knowledge of many of the 500+ volunteer force and their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Amy's efforts in recruiting, screening, training, supervising, persistently and diligently record-keeping, and recognizing volunteers help the center to consistently retain nearly 70% of instructional volunteers each year.



"Her can-do attitude, kindness, and genuine enthusiasm are infectious, and she inspires those around her to be the best they can be," says Director of Academic Programs and Student Services Xavier Muñoz. "She is the first to volunteer her time and energy to anything that pops up." Amy is a true people-person and connects with others easily. She is curious about others and makes connections between and among people regularly that help to build networks and strengthen our community. She has a deeply positive attitude and looks on the bright side of every situation. There is not a problem that crosses her desk that she cannot turn around into something with a silver lining. She is kind and supportive to everyone and will always lend a helping hand. She is one of the biggest supporters of the staff, and she assists with most projects, from registration to administrative work around the office. She champions the notion that every staff member at a community-based organization is a volunteer manager. Amy loves seeking out people who have particular interests, skills, and abilities and empowering them to use those abilities to meet the needs of others.

Amy has been recognized for her leadership by her peers and the community. She was personally invited to join Senator Tim Kaine in April 2022 for

Coffee with Women Leaders. Amy, along with fifteen other other women community leaders took part in an informal conversation on topics that ranged from workforce preparation to economic equity and global issues.

Amy Tristan is a graduate of Colgate University with a degree in social psychology. Before coming to the English Empowerment Center, she worked as a preschool ministry director, which involved recruiting, training, and leading a large team of volunteers. Prior to that, she was the Pro Bono Coordinator at a corporate law firm in D.C. that donated thousands of hours annually in the representation of nonprofit organizations and indigent individuals. Altogether, Amy has over a decade of experience working with volunteers and serving communities in the D.C. area. In her free time, she enjoys running, playing volleyball, baking cupcakes, drinking good coffee, and spending time with her husband and two children. 🌍

Brenda Hornbaker

Data Support
Specialist

Virginia Beach City
Public Schools, [Adult
Learning Center
\(ALC\)](#)

Region 20



// “We would be lost without Brenda,” assert the administrative staff at Adult Learning Center–Virginia Beach City Public Schools (ALC). “We know that data drives our programs—English Language Acquisition and Adult Basic Education/GED® alike. Brenda Hornback helps report, track, and review the data we must collect. In the world of ASPDs, SWS entries, proxy hours, GED® completion, attendance, and transfers within classes and programs, she wades through this enormous amount of information to make sure the ALC is compliant. It is no small task, but Brenda does it with grace and diligence.”

Brenda collaboratively works with teachers, teacher assistants, general assistants, and the ALC’s director and two program coordinators to make sure any errors and discrepancies are caught before data is submitted to the Commonwealth. Brenda reaches out to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and regional staff to clarify and ask questions as she deals with a world of ever-changing guidelines. “As the newest member of the administrative team at the ALC,” says Elizabeth Herlong, “I cannot speak more highly of all the assistance Brenda has provided me as I transition to the world of adult education.”

Brenda has worked at the ALC since 2008, serving as an ABE/GED® teacher assistant and clerical support assistant before moving into her current

position as data guru. Born in Texas and raised in New Jersey, Brenda and her husband settled in Virginia Beach thanks to the military. As a military spouse, Brenda earned her degree from the University of Maryland, European division, while her husband was stationed in England. She has three beautiful children and one grandson who she spoils by playing with him and taking him bowling.

Brenda has a strong work ethic, taking her job seriously and showing meticulous attention to detail. She is compassionate, humble, and genuine. Brenda brings to her role deep institutional knowledge of the ALC program and VDOE requirements; tireless and timely hard work; resourcefulness; collaboration skills; and, above all, sincere caring for all members of the ALC team. She is a true unsung work hero. 🙌

**To all of our heroes
working in adult
education,
we thank you!**



2023

PROGRESS CALENDAR

MAR

1 VALRC Webinar: [The Change Agent for ABE & HSE Instruction](#)
1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m. EST
Virtual

2 VALRC Webinar: [The Change Agent for English Language Instruction](#)
3:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m. EST
Virtual

3–4 [OTAN Techology and Distance Learning Symposium](#)
Hybrid: Virtual or Chula Vista, CA

7 VALRC Key Shifts Series: [Teaching Learners to Use Evidence](#)
1:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m. EST
Virtual

21 VALRC Key Shifts Series: [Teaching to Build Knowledge](#)
1:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m. EST
Virtual

21–24 [TESOL 2023 International Convention & English Language Expo](#)
Portland, OR

25–28 [National Association of Workforce Boards \(NAWB\): The Forum 2023](#)
Washington, DC

28 VALRC [IET & IELCE Instructors Professional Learning Community](#)
3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m. EST
Virtual

APR

MAR 29–1 [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics \(NCTM\) 2023 Virtual Conference: Amplify & Activate In & Beyond the Classroom](#)
Virtual

2–5 [Coalition on Adult Basic Education \(COABE\) 2023 National Conference](#)
Atlanta, GA

23 VALRC Online Courses begin (schedule subject to change)

[Numeracy Practices for Adult Education](#) (6 weeks)

[Beyond Basics: Multilevel ESOL Basics](#) (6 weeks)

25 VALRC [IET & IELCE Instructors Professional Learning Community](#)
3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m. EST
Virtual

MAY

1–3 [National Skills Coalition: Skills Summit](#)
Washington, DC

JUN

29 [Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium \(MERC\) Summit: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice Through Shifting Paradigms in Public Education](#)
Richmond, VA

