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LEARNING ENGLISH AT CNU

LITERACY FOR LIFE SERVES LOCAL RESIDENTS

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Local residents are learning English as a Second Language (ESL) in a dedicated classroom at Christopher Newport University, thanks to a partnership with Literacy for Life, a non-profit providing adult literacy services to the Peninsula region.

“Christopher Newport University has a long tradition of public service as part of our commitment to helping students become active citizens, leaders, and caretakers of their communities,” said Vanessa Buehlman, Director of Community Engagement. “It was a natural fit to welcome Literacy for Life onto our campus and leverage our combined resources to provide these vital services to the region. We already see the impact of this partnership on our broader community — not just for our students, faculty, and staff, but also for our neighbors.”

Literacy for Life is not only a life-changing experience for adult learners, but also for volunteer tutors, who embrace the opportunity to learn through service. Tutors develop their teaching and communication skills, and also broaden their worldview by engaging with community members with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

“Thanks to strategic partnerships and the generosity of our community, Literacy for Life can reach and impact the lives of an additional 31,000 people in Newport News and Hampton to improve their literacy and access to meaningful and substantial employment,” said Literacy for Life Executive Director Jason Thompson. “We are especially thankful to partners like Christopher Newport University, whose support is critical to our expansion efforts. CNU’s in-kind classroom provides adult learners with a conducive space to receive life-changing

instruction.”

Peninsula READS provided literacy services in Newport News and Hampton for a half-century, until the agency closed in August 2023. Literacy for Life, based in Williamsburg, was able to fill the gap in services by partnering with CNU, which has provided designated classroom space on campus so that tutors and students could continue meeting.

“As a community-based literacy organization, we rely upon our community for everything from space to volunteers to funding,” Thornton said. “As we expand our services into Newport News and Hampton, we are actively seeking sustainable funding from local stakeholders as well as in-kind support from partners like CNU so that we can sustain our efforts indefinitely.”

Literacy for Life offers adult learners one-on-one and small group tutoring, along with classroom instruction, in reading, writing, math, and English language. Literacy for Life serves more than 700 learners annually with the help of more than 200 volunteer tutors and several professional instructors. Instruction takes place not only at the Literacy for Life space at CNU, but also at offices in Williamsburg, Hampton, and in other public locations. Adult learners benefit from the flexibility, individualized instruction, and encouragement offered by volunteer tutors. As a result, learners achieve a wide array of personal goals ranging from understanding their paychecks to obtaining workforce certifications or preparing for community college.

For more information about Literacy for Life, including opportunities to donate or volunteer, visit literacyforlife.org.
