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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Somerset, Hunterdon Literacy Programs Offer Virtual Class Experience for Summer and Beyond

A new series of virtual literacy services is set to begin next month for adult learners seeking a high school diploma and/ or to develop English language skills in Hunterdon and Somerset counties.

Like other programs around the state and nation, because of the coronavirus pandemic, the programs once offered in face to face settings in libraries and churches have moved to a remote-learning model. Students and teachers will be using Zoom, Whatsapp and other virtual methods to conduct individual and group learning. Some of the programs also are purchasing additional Chrome books to help support students' learning experiences.

Regardless of the setting, these services offer residents the opportunity to prepare for the high school equivalency exam and improve their English-language learning skills for free. Funded through federal and state grants, the participating agencies offer students a variety of programs, including high school equivalency and career training, with the goal of getting participants employed or on a more sustaining career pathway.

Beginning on July 1, Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission is hosting new literacy programs open to residents of Hunterdon and Somerset counties. Services include high school equivalency, basic computer skills and English Language acquisition. In Hunterdon County, prospective students should email vszymanski@hunterdonesc.org, or call 908-237-5000. In Somerset County, prospective students should email spettesch@hunterdonesc.org, or call 908-541-5781.

In addition, the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission also operates two Workforce Learning Link sites offering adult literacy programs. These programs offered through the Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Center, are also currently being offered remotely, and may go back to some form of in-person classes later this summer or in the early fall.

Also beginning on July 1, Hunterdon Helpline will offer English Language acquisition training, as well courses in Servsafe Food Handler and Servsafe Alcohol certifications. Prospective students should email literacy@helplinehc.com or call 908-782-4357.

Then, beginning on Oct. 1, the Jointure will offer English Language acquisition training and courses in Servsafe Food Handler and Servsafe Alcohol certifications. Prospective students should email bscharf@jointure.org, or call 908-722-0233, ext. 112.

Also beginning on Oct. 1, the Franklin Board of Education will be offering High School equivalency training. Prospective students should call 908-421-3833 or email franklinadulted@gmail.com.

In addition to these programs, English Language acquisition continues to be offered on an ongoing virtual basis by the Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County, via Zoom, WhatsApp, text message, and the phone. There is no charge for these volunteer-led classes being done remotely, and new tutors continue to be trained; call 908-725-5430 or email info@literacysomerset.org for more information.

Raritan Valley Community College also offers literacy classes in different settings and levels, from basic to advanced levels of discussion and presentation or accent reduction. ESL classes can also be delivered online exclusively for a workforce team, sometimes at no cost to employers or employees. Visit <https://www.raritanval.edu/career-training/professional-development-courses> to check the college's current offerings or email Aubrey.flanagan@raritanval.edu with any questions.

Many of these programs had traditionally offered classes in libraries throughout the region, but libraries are expected to remain closed throughout the summer to in-person services. Once libraries reopen, literacy services are expected to be among available services.

These providers are also part of the Literacy Committee of the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board, providing workforce training and related services to employers and job seekers in Hunterdon and Somerset counties. To learn more about the committee's work and mission, call 908-203-6044.

Weekly text updates also highlight career and job opportunities in Somerset and Hunterdon counties. Text "onestop" to 565-12 to sign up.

The state also has posted web resources for employers on the state's [COVID-19 hub page](#) and on the [Department of Labor website](#).

Questions? Contact GRWDB Board Director Paul Grzella at grzella@co.somerset.nj.us, or 908-203-6044.

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