

SERIES: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato
TITLE: Caucus Up Close: Family Literacy
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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Adult literacy, next on Caucus.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY, has been provided by Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health care products company, New Jersey Natural Gas Company, proud to support education in our community, and by Verizon Communications.

Ms. CONSUELO McPHERSON (Literacy Student): `Read something from a newspaper...

Ms. TERRANCE MARTIN (Tutor): OK.

Ms. McPHERSON: ...a book, an advertisement...'

Mr. MARTIN: Good. Nice.

BETH GLENN (Segment Producer): One in five American adults cannot read well enough to meet the practical needs of daily life. They cannot read a menu, the word `danger' or `stop' on a traffic sign. The statistics are startling, and they translate to chronic unemployment, poverty, and painful emotional stigma.

Ms. McPHERSON: I don't know what happened, why I didn't learn to--to read and to write growing up, is because my--there was no attention there.

GLENN: Born in Belize, Consuelo McPherson grew up in an impoverished broken home.

Ms. McPHERSON: We were poor. We were one of the poor families, and since I was five years old, you know, we didn't have clothes, the things we wanted to go to school. There was no shoes.

GLENN: For Consuelo, education came second to basic survival.

Ms. McPHERSON: The farthest I can remember, I went to third grade, and to be honest, I don't know how I got there.

GLENN: Consuelo had many disadvantages, but she was determined to better her life. Turning 18, she managed to secure work in the United States as a domestic, then, later, as a nanny.

Ms. McPHERSON: When I came here, I didn't know anything, anything at all.

GLENN: The definition of illiterate has changed a great deal in the last 150 years. Today, very few people have no skills at all.

Ms. PATRICIA JOHNSTON (National Chair, Pro Literacy America): What we're usually dealing with are people who are functionally illiterate. That means they just don't have the level of skills they need to do the things they need to be a good citizen, a good parent and a good worker.

GLENN: After a month of private tutoring and much encouragement from her future husband, Trevor, Consuelo received her driver's license. But it was the birth of her son, Trevor Jr., that really changed her life.

Ms. McPHERSON: You're home, Trev.

GLENN: Consuelo enrolled in Jersey City Library's literacy program, where she had the good fortune being matched with tutor Terrance Martin.

Mr. MARTIN: ...with some, you know, fluidity and expression. That's terrific.

Tutoring is a collaborative pro--process. We become a team. We work together, we support each other. We suc--we succeed together and sometimes we have challenges that we have to overcome together.

Ms. McPHERSON: `Dear Parents, The end of the year...'

GLENN: Consuelo's primary goal is to be able to read to her son.

Ms. NANCY SAMBUL (Literacy Program, Jersey City Public Library): The reason we consider family literacy so important is that when we look at our adults, what we see is a very high percentage, maybe 90 percent, who did not have books to read when they were three and four and five. Their parents were not able to read English to them. Possibly they were immigrants or possibly they were illiterate, and there's this cycle of illiteracy.

Ms. McPHERSON: What color is that rose?

TREVOR Jr.: I don't know.

GLENN: Literacy experts agree that teachers cannot do it alone. Parents are the first teachers, and one-one-one tutoring programs for adults are extremely important.

Ms. McPHERSON: `Wake up, Farmer Pig, it's time to go to work.'

GLENN: Consuelo has been working with Terry Martin for eight months now, and she has made enormous strides.

Mr. MARTIN: When I see the--first of all, the determination on Consuelo's part, and the courage to say `There's something here that's been holding me back a little bit. I'm going to--I'm going to get over that.'

GLENN: According to experts, literacy must be a group effort.

Ms. McPHERSON: `What's the big, big day?'

TREVOR: Day.

Ms. JOHNSTON: You can't separate adult literacy, children's literacy, family literacy. If it doesn't all work together, then you've got gaps in your system.

GLENN: Consuelo credits her husband Trevor for his patience and encouragement.

Mr. TREVOR McPHERSON Sr. (Consuelo's Husband): She's gotten more confident. She wants to do more, explore more, and I'm behind her.

Mr. MARTIN: It's a--it's a wonderful experience, and when I see somebody that is so committed and dedicated to--to succeeding, I--I'm filled with joy and filled with--with motivation to keep working.

Ms. JOHNSTON: You will not meet a tutor who says, `I gave more that I got back.'

Ms. DARNELLE RICHARDSON (Literacy Program, Jersey City Public Library): You don't really need a background in library science to be a literacy volunteer. You need to have patience, you need to have the love of reading, you need to want to be able to give back to your community.

Ms. McPHERSON: I'm doing this because I want better for me and for my child.

Ms. JOHNSTON: Once you get into becoming a tutor, and then as I did, a trainer, what you find is that learning to read is a much more serious thing, that people who are coming to us to learn to read, very few of them just want to be able to sit down and read a novel. They need this. You can live a lifetime without learning how to read. You can't function as well without learning to read.

Ms. McPHERSON: You know a lot, you know that?

TREVOR Jr.: Yeah.

Ms. McPHERSON: You know more than me when I was your age.

TREVOR Jr.: Thanks.

Ms. McPHERSON: You're welcome.

ADUBATO: Imagine not being able to read a simple warning label on a household product or struggling to read a bedtime story to your kids. I'm Steve Adubato. For many adults, poor reading skills can be a roadblock to leading productive lives.

Joining us to discuss what's being done to improve literacy among children and adults are Elissa Director, who is in fact the executive director of Literacy Volunteers of America-New Jersey, a training institute for adult literacy instructors and students. Terrance Martin, who you saw in the tape piece, is the New Jersey Literacy Volunteers of America's Tutor of the Year, and you can see why, from that piece. Joyce Clements is a motivational speaker and former adult literacy student. And finally, our good friend Penni Wild is executive director of New Jersey Reads, a non-profit organization formed to raise awareness on the importance of literacy. I want to thank all of you for joining us.

You know, Penni, le--let me start with. You know, we are, in fact, old friends. We've worked in public television before, and this new challenge for you with New Jersey Reads, tell us exactly what the organization is and how it is intending to deal with some of the problems we saw on that tape piece.

Ms. PENNI WILD (New Jersey Reads): Well, as everybody heard, four in 10 adults in New Jersey alone are not functionally literate, which means that they can't read a bedtime story to their child, they may not be able to interpret a sign on the highway that wasn't in the driver's manual, all sorts of different things that we take for granted. And with literacy, there's a cure. We know what the cure is, and the fact is, people are out there working every day, volunteering every day, and it's a--it's a community that needs more volunteers and more money to keep programs running, and that's what we're...

ADUBATO: And New Jersey Reads--I want to be clear on this--and by the way, folks in the control room, put up our Web site, because here's the deal. When we committed to doing this program on literacy, and the literacy pro--literacy problem particularly among adults, our whole focus was to try to get you to care, because four in 10...

Ms. WILD: Four in 10.

ADUBATO: Talking about an embarrassment for our society. What can you do about it? We have our Web site up, which will link to New Jersey Reads. If you want to volunteer, as Terry has done and great--making a great difference with Consuelo, right?

Mr. MARTIN: Yes.

ADUBATO: And all you have to do is log on our site, we'll link to New

Jersey Reads, and what happens then?

Ms. WILD: When you get to the New Jersey Reads site, there's a button that says 'donate,' 'volunteer.' Click on one or the other, whatever you want to do. You can donate online or you can become a volunteer and we'll...

ADUBATO: Or both.

Ms. WILD: ...refer you. Or both.

ADUBATO: Or both, if you want to be ...(unintelligible).

Ms. WILD: Absolutely, or both.

ADUBATO: Joyce, talk to us a little--little bit about your experience. You saw Consuelo.

Ms. JOYCE E. CLEMENTS (Former Adult Literacy Student): Yes.

ADUBATO: Could you relate to her?

Ms. CLEMENTS: I could relate to her, definitely, because I started out, I couldn't read or write. I didn't have the luxuries that she had in the beginning. I had to search for it, and when I found it, OK, because when I first started, I we--I heard a program in Philadelphia.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. CLEMENTS: But when I went to that program in Philadelphia, and they--they didn't have it because the man wanted to get paid for it. He didn't want to volunteer anymore. So on the Speedline coming back, I met a stranger.

ADUBATO: On the train?

Ms. CLEMENTS: On the train. On the Speedline, I met a stranger who I just decided to talk to, because I was devastated.

ADUBATO: Sure.

Ms. CLEMENTS: I didn't know where I--to go. So he told me about the LVA. I went to the LVA.

ADUBATO: The LVA is Literacy Volunteers of America.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Yes. Yes. And I got in touch with one of the ladies there and they set me up with a tutor and we began th--we began there.

ADUBATO: How long ago was that?

Ms. CLEMENTS: In 19--that was in 1983, OK? My first tutor, she was great because she helped me, she put the foundation--her name was Marlene McVin. She set the foundation for me, and at that time I had to work plus raise two children. Those...

ADUBATO: Wait. Excuse me, Joyce, back up a second. You're working, you're raising two children.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Yes.

ADUBATO: And you're functionally...

Ms. CLEMENTS: Illiterate.

ADUBATO: H--talk to us as much as you can...

Ms. CLEMENTS: Well...

ADUBATO: ...about what was going on in the home with your kids.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Well, you know, I--I had a--I had a husband--I have a husband, and he couldn't understand. Not everybody can understand illiteracy, OK? When you can't read or write, you can't go to the grocery store. You--you just can't read. You have to depend on him, and I was dependent on him. He couldn't handle that. So it was--I was left alone with two children. When my children got sick and they needed to be home and when they needed a note, I couldn't write that note.

ADUBATO: You couldn't write the note...

Ms. CLEMENTS: No.

ADUBATO: ...for the teacher or the principal...

Ms. CLEMENTS: No, no.

ADUBATO: To say that your kid was sick?

Ms. CLEMENTS: No. No. I would just send my son to school. That--and my son would come home crying, 'Mom, I need a note. I need a note.' So I had to force my son to learn how to write so he could--he could get on a level where he could write the note out and I could rewrite it to him to send to school.

ADUBATO: Compare today, very quickly if you could, with what you experienced then, what is your life like now? How different?

Ms. CLEMENTS: It's very different. I can read. I can write. I'm in school. I'm--I'm about to receive my diploma. I'm...

ADUBATO: Now you're a motivational speaker.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Yes.

ADUBATO: You're out there.

Ms. CLEMENTS: I'm out there now because I--I could--I feel what the others are going through.

ADUBATO: So what's the message, Joyce? Someone watching right now. Go ahead, look in that camera. You're a motivational speaker, you can get people motivated to do the right thing.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Just go--just go--just go to the LVA, go to Lifelong Learning, go wherever you can go and stay focused and just do it. Don't think about it. Just do it. Don't listen to what other people tell you. Just do it.

ADUBATO: You're listening to Joyce talk. You're thinking what?

Mr. MARTIN: I'm thinking that I would love to see Consuelo years from now, you know, achieving those--those successes, and I'm sure she will, with the motivation that she has and the dedication that she has to--to overcome the literacy challenges that she has now.

ADUBATO: What's it done for you?

Mr. MARTIN: It's--it's filled my heart with joy. This--this program is--as the lady said before, you get more than you give. Consuelo and I worked together and I tell my wife af--after every session, you know, 'I was tired this morning. I didn't want to--you know.' I come back and I say, 'I'm exhilarated because of--of the give and take between--between us.' So it's good. It's a wonderful program.

ADUBATO: But what does it take, Terry? Say--you know, Penni made the pitch before, we talked about volunteering, and Joyce talked directly to those who may be struggling.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Right.

ADUBATO: What is the message to those who say, 'You know, that guy Terry, he seems like a good guy, but I'm not that good. I don't have that much patience'? What does it take to be a really good literacy volunteer?

Mr. MARTIN: It--it does--it takes a tremendous amount of patience. You--you've got to realize that the literacy--that learning to read is a process that we've probably forgot how we learned to read.

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Mr. MARTIN: I can't remember how I learned to read. But you--you have to know that it takes time, and we must be really--we--we

structure our sessions together in small steps.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MARTIN: We create small goals. We build a--a nice--nice treasury of successes, and then any time things got a little trough, you can fall back on that treasury of successes that we've had. I'll say, 'Look where you were, you know, three months ago. Look what we're doing now.' And that provides additional motivation to any student. And Consuelo is a wonderful example of that. We've made great progress in eight months.

ADUBATO: Jump in, yeah.

Ms. ELISSA DIRECTOR (Literacy Volunteers of America - NJ): Yes, if I might add, if anyone is interested in becoming a literacy volunteer, there are 23 programs throughout New Jersey. So we're virtually throughout the state. There are over 2,500 volunteers in New Jersey at the current time, and each program does provide training for volunteers. So they will attend anywhere between 15 and 25 hours of training to become certified as a tutor to work with adults with limited literacy, or also we work with adults whose first language is not English and we help them to learn--to improve--to improve their communication skills.

ADUBATO: So it's not like you just walk in and you say--say someone, their heart is in the right place, they want to do the right thing, they see that there's a need, four in 10, as Penni said--talk about the social and economic impact that we'll get to in a minute. There is help out there to help you get ready to help someone else as a tutor right?

Ms. DIRECTOR: Oh, absolutely. It's a very intensive training program. There are resource materials and you really learn how to work with an adult learner, a collaborative relationship, as Terry mentioned. You learn how to do lesson planning, you know what kind of resources and techniques are appropriate and successful.

ADUBATO: And, in fact, to that end, liter--if people log on to our site, which will be up on the screen in just a moment, and they link--when they see New Jersey Reads, we'll also find a way to connect them to Literacy Volunteers of America.

Ms. DIRECTOR: Yes.

ADUBATO: You wanted to jump back in, I can tell.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Yeah. The--it's not always going to be easy. It--it's not always going to be easy when you have your tutor. It's not always going to be easy. There's gives and takes. It's a connective thing. It's a bond that--that you have to--both of you have to earn to be able to make it work. And--you see what I'm

saying? It just doesn't come overnight, but it's not nothing that anybody has to be afraid of.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. CLEMENTS: It's just that when you get into it and you learn it and you find a tutor, the both of you have to come together to be able to bond to make this thing become a success.

ADUBATO: Penni, how did we get in the condition we are in? How does it get this bad?

Ms. WILD: Well, it--I don't--I don't have an answer for that, actually.

ADUBATO: Did we know...

Ms. WILD: The answer...

ADUBATO: ...all along that it was this bad?

Ms. WILD: I think that what happens is we don't think about it, you know. We--most of the people that are watching the show probably woke up this morning, read the paper...

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. WILD: ...read the cereal box ingredients while they were, you know, chomping on food.

ADUBATO: Or wrote a note for their kids 'cause...

Ms. WILD: Wrote a note for their kids.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Right.

ADUBATO: ...their kid can't go to school, took it for granted.

Ms. WILD: Whatever. So we just--we just go ahead and we start living our lives, and all of a sudden, 'Oh, my gosh,' to hear that four in 10 adults can't do what I just did, what you just did this morning is unbelievable. So--so it's really awareness. It's saying...

Ms. CLEMENTS: Exactly.

Ms. WILD: ...every day you wake up and you have a chance to build your American Dream, whatever that is, and your gift of reading can help others create their American dream.

ADUBATO: But are there certain people who are more likely to have a problem with literacy? I mean, immigrant population?

Ms. DIRECTOR: Well, I can address that issue. Certainly New Jersey has a very high rate of immigration and we have certainly found just with the Literacy Volunteers network in New Jersey that approximately 70 percent of the students that we are now currently helping are students from other countries who--some of whom may be very well educated in the--in their home countries but need to improve their ability to understand and speak English, as well as to read and write proficiently in English.

So that's one segment of the population. You also have--New Jersey has a large number of high school dropouts, and statistically it in--most statistics indicate that those students are reading well below a ninth-grade reading level. You have another segment of the population who has gone through and probably holds a high school diploma; however, their literacy skills are not adequate for the more demanding and changing workplace needs in New Jersey. Higher level skills are required.

And then you've got other individuals who probably have, quite honestly, undiagnosed learning disabilities which have prevented them from being successful.

ADUBATO: They have a learning disability...

Ms. DIRECTOR: Yeah, and it's--which is probably undiagnosed. And--however we have often found success in Literacy Volunteers because we work one on one with an individual student that providing an individual learner, that one-on-one relationship where you can really focus in on their learning styles, how they learn best, strategies and techniques to help them, they can make progress and increase their ability to read and write.

ADUBATO: To that--to that end--let me--let me try this one. The impact of an adult's literacy challenge on children, the children in that family--what is that impact?

Mr. MARTIN: The impact is great. And it--and it's very poignant in the sense that the--the adults that I've worked with--Consuelo is one who's made great progress--they--they want to read to their children. I--I had a student before Consuelo who very much wanted to read to her children. And so we worked hard and hard and hard on that. And we--we made good progress, and I remember one day in the Jersey City Library, she used to come early--early to our sessions. And she'd thumb through the children's section. And she pulled out--she pulled out a book--pulled out a book that I had never seen before. And her young daughter happened to be with us that day because she--nobody--nobody to baby-sit for her. And I didn't know the book, so we sat down and she said, 'Well, let's read this.' It turned out to be "The Giving Tree," which everybody else in the world knows about except me. And we sat there--and my cultural illiteracy got developed.

ADUBATO: We'll do another show on that book, Terry.

Mr. MARTIN: Yeah, right, do that. But we went through this--you know, the story was so poignant and this student was--when it was over, she read it to her young daughter. And we took, you know, 15, 20 minutes, a half hour to read that. And it was a marvelous experience. The daughter was transfixed. Minerva was exhilarated by it--her success. And I was so happy watching the both of them together, you know, with a mother reading to her daughter, which had been her goal. We had been together close to a year at that time.

ADUBATO: Tremendously rewarding?

Mr. MARTIN: Tremendously.

ADUBATO: To say the least. You know, we've talked about the--the New Jersey problem with respect to literacy, and as you're watching this program, just tuned in, flicking through programs that are not as interesting as this one, here you are and you say, 'Huh, what are they doing on public television?' well, we're talking about literacy. We're talking about the fact that four in 10 adults in this state, and frankly, Penni, we are seen in several states along the east coast. It is not simply a New Jersey problem. It is a national problem, OK? Laura Bush, the president's wife, is interested in this. Dina McGreevey--Matos, who is the governor's wife, is very interested in this issue. And the governor, in fact, has taken this on as a high priority, correct?

Ms. WILD: He's taken literacy on as a high priority, and what we're talking with him about as well is to extend child literacy into family literacy because the parent is the first teacher, and the parent often is the first reader. And if you have a parent that can't read in the home, then the child doesn't have any reinforcement, the child doesn't have that guidepost. So that's another key element. And the funding for family literacy and for adult literacy has just dwindled.

ADUBATO: It has. And, you know, we're--we're talking about who's--you know, we're not looking to assign blame here, but the question as to who is responsible, I mean, ultimately volunteers step up, your organizations step up and do things. But I have to tell you, while the governor talks about it, and it's great that we have a cheerleader out there, government funding has dwindled. And when you look to the corporate community, to be real blunt about it, you know, corporations like Verizon, the Verizon Foundation, they're really the only folks putting bucks into New Jersey Reads. And I don't want to, you know, say anything bad about the rest of the corporate community, but I have to tell you, I'm wondering, do they see that it's a problem for them, for the corporate community, for employers? Where are the other corporations?

Ms. WILD: Well, the Verizon Foundation kicked us off. New Jersey

Reads is a start-up, so we're in 18 months of really just ramping up, brought together by a huge community support of Literacy Volunteers, state librarians, Library Association, educators all coming around the table saying, 'How are we going to deal with this in New Jersey?'

ADUBATO: Why is this in a corporation's interest? Or how is it in their interest?

Ms. WILD: Because a person who--chances are any employer has somebody that's working for them who may not be able to read the labels to mix the chemicals that need to be mixed together to apply to some applications for the day. Somebody else may not be able to write a report. I know somebody who was a--a manager level, always mysteriously took writing assignments home to get done. Come to find out that that person never really learned how to write a report.

ADUBATO: A manager in a corporation?

Ms. WILD: A manager in a corporation. Because the...

ADUBATO: So you can function on some level...

Ms. WILD: Oh, absolutely.

ADUBATO: ...but--but it's--but it hurt--it's gotta hurt, not just you...

Ms. WILD: It's got to be so painful to go through every day hoping that you don't get found out.

Ms. CLEMENTS: ...(Unintelligible).

ADUBATO: Did that--was that happening a few years ago, you didn't want to get found out?

Ms. CLEMENTS: That happened--that happened to me. That--I worked at a company and I didn't know how to read. I just worked very hard and covered it up. But then it got to the point--there's always one person that will find you out, and one person did find me out. And when she did that, it was all over for me.

ADUBATO: Well, how--how--so she finds you out. Is the attitude, 'Hey, let's help--let's help our colleague'?

Ms. CLEMENTS: Oh, she didn't--she wasn't going to help me. She just, you know--you know how they do, they'll talk behind your back and you start to feel very--you're embarrassed. You--you--because a lot of people, they don't know and they don't understand. I've been through this, OK? They don't understand. The first thing they want to say to you is, 'How come you couldn't--how come you didn't know how to read? I don't--I don't understand that.' That's how they do you.

ADUBATO: What--how did you respond?

Ms. CLEMENTS: I--I--one lady--one lady came up to me and asked me that, and I said, 'Well, it's like being in Germany. So if you was in Germany and you sat down with a bunch of Germans at a restaurant and you was looking at a menu that was in German, how would you feel? That's how I feel here today.' And it's--it wasn't her fault. I don't blame anybody. It's--I know that--that was something I had to work through and I did. But still today you're going to have people that's going to say to you, 'I just don't understand how come you couldn't read when you have all these opportunities here.' But at the time when I was coming up, the opportunities weren't there. And when they were there, it's hard to get to them, especially when you can't drive and you can--you can't read. I mean...

ADUBATO: That has to hurt.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Even when I learned how to drive, I still--there were still words up there that I didn't--I'm--I'm supposed to go north and I'm going south.

ADUBATO: Jump back in.

Ms. DIRECTOR: I think that we can't always equate level of education with reading level.

Ms. CLEMENTS: No.

Ms. DIRECTOR: I've also been a tutor for many years in--with Literacy Volunteers and I've seen many students who have--may have 12 years of, quote, "formal" education but may be reading at a second- or third-grade reading level. So...

ADUBATO: How does that happen?

Ms. CLEMENTS: Because they pass them. They just pass them through.

Ms. DIRECTOR: And in--in some cases people--some students are passed because they're quiet, they're not disruptive...

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. DIRECTOR: ...and so they--you know, they're pleasant so they're passed through the system. There are others who have--often have very disruptive lives. They may have moved many times, so that when they go from system to system they're simply placed in whatever appropriate grade level and moved through the system. There--there's not any one factor, but--but I think that there is an assumption that because someone has a high school diploma, a high school education, then he must be truly, quote, "literate."

ADUBATO: Well, let--let me try this. You're watching television.

What role can or does television play with respect to helping folks who are challenged in this area? Terry, what's your sense of that? Do we help?

Mr. MARTIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. If somebody's watching TV, they're--they're speaking vocabulary is building. And that's one very interesting characteristic about the people we deal with, is that they--they do watch TV.

ADUBATO: Is this particularly true for public television? I'm sorry.

Mr. MARTIN: I would say yes.

ADUBATO: That's a shameless plug. It was inappropriate. Go ahead. I'm sorry. It's true?

Mr. MARTIN: It is true. It is true.

ADUBATO: We are better.

Mr. MARTIN: Well, there's--the public--the--there's so many shows that--that really focus on learning to read.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MARTIN: And sometimes they're focusing on learning to read other languages. But they're very, very helpful. And the...

ADUBATO: But again, I want to be clear, watching television is no substitute for learning to read and ultimately reading.

Ms. CLEMENTS: Exactly. One-on-one is the best...

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. CLEMENTS: ...way to do it.

ADUBATO: Believe it or not, we actually have a minute left in the program. One more plug here, folks. If you're watching this program and there's something we've said or more importantly one of our colleagues has said that--that moved you to want to be helpful, log on to our Web site. And we've put it up throughout the program. We'll connect to New Jersey Reads. We'll connect to the Volunteers of America, right? We'll be helpful if possible...

Ms. WILD: There's something for employers, too.

ADUBATO: Say that again. One last pitch. You've got 30 second.

Ms. WILD: There's something--there's something for employers who do want to get involved. We just finished--LVA has created a 15-hour program for companies that have volunteer programs, they can teach

people on company time to become volunteers. Go back to your community, do what you want to do. Or hook up with an organization locally to help others learn how to read.

ADUBATO: Final word. No reason for someone not to get help, right?

Ms. CLEMENTS: Not today. Not today. You have the LVA, you have Lifelong Learning, you have all these different programs today. And I just pray and hope that all the young people and adults will take my advice, and the gentleman over there, and learn how to read. Here's your chance.

ADUBATO: Yeah, it's made a difference for--changed your life.

Ms. CLEMENTS: It has made--it has made a big difference in my life. I am now working and I am now able to read...

ADUBATO: We'll keep talking off the air.

Announcer: If you'd like more information on this program, or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org. And visit us on the World Wide Web at www.caucusnj.org.

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