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TAMMY WELLS/Journal Tribune

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Sanford featured their students and tutors of the year at their annual dinner last week. Pictured, left to right, are James Butler and his tutor Peter Libby, and Corey Butler and his tutor Roger Huppe.

## LVGS celebrates literacy

By TAMMY WELLS

Senior Staff Writer

SANFORD — Taking that first step is the toughest part. Those adults who have done it say walking into the literacy office and telling the folks there you need help in reading, math or computer skills just isn't easy.

The folks at Literacy Volunteers of Greater Sanford know it's a difficult first step. But they know, too, that it's a worthwhile one. They've helped hundreds of people

achieve literacy since the inception of the program here in 1986, 28 years ago.

A few months ago, two Sanford brothers, James and Corey Butler, were encouraged by a family friend to try the program.

"I've known them since they were 4 and 5 years

*"I think it changes your life."*

Corey Butler, LVGS student

old," said Deb Godin. "Both struggled with reading, and I debated whether I should ask them to check it out."

She did — and they did. "They've made great strides," Godin told folks at the LVGS annual student recogni-

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## Literacy Volunteers

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tion dinner June 18.

"It was pretty scary at first," said Corey Butler, "but I got used to it after a while."

"It was nerve-wracking," agreed his brother, James, "but I felt comfortable after a couple of days."

Now 23 and 25 years old, the brothers had attended school, but, said Corey, "it almost felt like I just passed. Here, I'm learning something."

"I never had to focus in school," said James.

The brothers say what makes LVGS different than the school environment is one-on-one tutoring.

Their tutors had praise for their students.

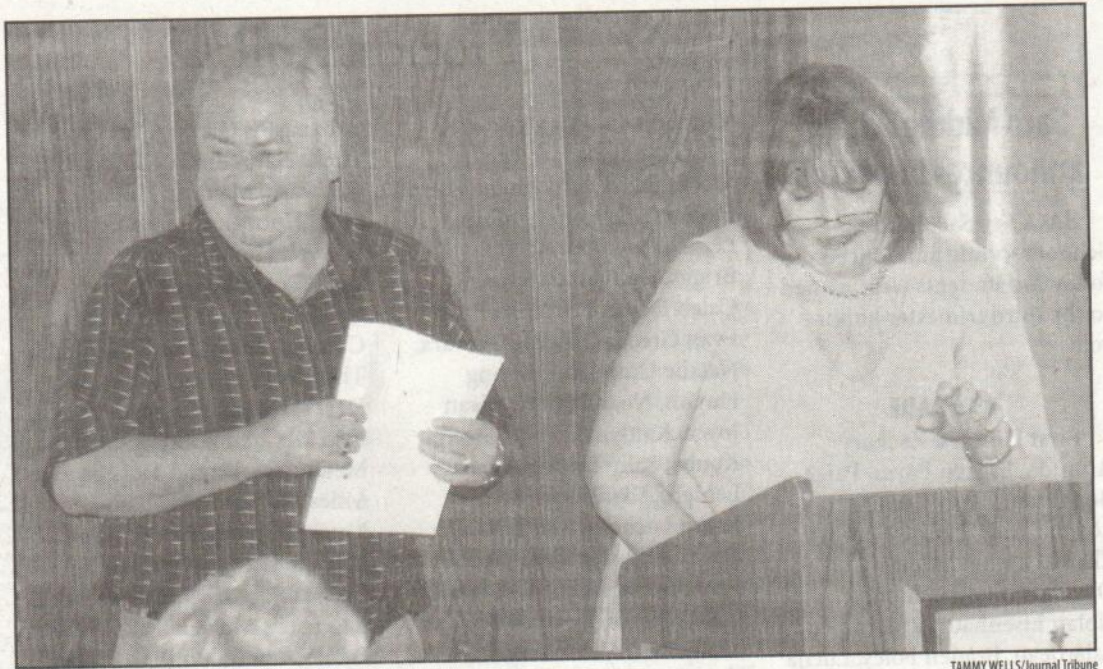
Tutor Peter Libby said James is dedicated to what he's doing.

"He's progressed a lot," he said.

"Corey is easy to work with," said his tutor, Roger Huppe. "It's really a pleasure to work with him."

Dennis Nadeau earned the Student Achievement Award. An enthusiastic supporter of LVGS' Books and Blockbusters program that combines watching movies and the books on which they were based, Nadeau has bloomed in the program, honing his social skills.

"You are the heart of Books and Blockbusters," said Shawn Sullivan, an LVGS board member and movie buff, who said he thought reading books and



TAMMY WELLS/Journal Tribune

Marcel Gagnon earned the Linda B. Gulnac Award for his volunteer work with Literacy Volunteers of Greater Sanford and is shown here smiling to the audience as Gulnac speaks about his accomplishments at the agency's annual dinner a week ago.

watching movies could be a good tool for literacy, so he started the program.

Volunteer Linda Gulnac presented a volunteer award that bears her name to volunteer Marcel Gagnon, whom she said picks up on the special challenges faced by literacy students.

"He realizes how terrifying" it can be for a first-time student, she said. "Marcel exemplifies the meaning of volunteerism."

Gagnon, for his part, said students show great courage when they make that first foray into the office at 883 Main St. He said students make progress

in literacy – and their self-esteem improves at the same time.

He turned to volunteers, and quoted retired Army Gen. Norman Schwarzkoph: "You cannot help someone up a hill without getting closer to the top yourself," he said.

Corey Butler reflected on the value of literacy.

"I think it changes your life," he said.

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Sanford services a wide area that includes Sanford, Springvale, Acton, Alfred, Shapleigh, Waterboro, the Berwicks, Eliot, Wells and Kennebunk. Programs

are available at York County Shelter, and to inmates at the state-operated Southern Maine Re-entry Center, located on the grounds of York County Jail in Alfred.

Those interested in volunteering or in brushing up on their literacy skills can drop by the office at 883 Main St. in Sanford Tuesday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.. To make an appointment, email [lvgsanford@gmail.com](mailto:lvgsanford@gmail.com) or call 324-2486.

— Senior Staff Writer Tammy Wells can be contacted at 324-4444 (local call in Sanford) or 282-1535, ext. 327 or [twells@journaltribune.com](mailto:twells@journaltribune.com).