



## Ruth J. Colvin

For years, literacy as a global mission interested Ruth Johnson Colvin. When, in 1962, she learned there were over 11,000 people functioning at the lowest level of literacy in her own city of Syracuse, NY, she decided to do something about it. She started Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc.—one of the founding organizations of ProLiteracy Worldwide.

Today, Mrs. Colvin continues to look for increasingly effective ways to teach both basic literacy and English as a second language. She stresses the importance of educationally sound *learner-centered* training of tutors and an ongoing support system. Her international work has included lectures and conferences, but she considers her most meaningful experiences to be those where she has trained and acted as a consultant in grass roots ventures.

With over 40 years of literacy experience in the U.S.A., nine published books, 29 awards/honors for her efforts, and hundreds of “people stories” from the 60 countries where she has worked or visited, Mrs. Colvin, a life member of ProLiteracy Worldwide’s Board of Directors, continues to be a source of inspiration and learning.

### Education

Thornton Junior College, Harvey, IL  
Moser Business College, Chicago, IL  
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL  
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY – B.S.

### Literacy Chronology

1962 Founded Literacy Volunteers, Inc. in Syracuse, NY.

1967 – 1972 Chartered in New York State as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization; Literacy Volunteers, Inc.’s name was changed to Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc.; total number of LVA affiliates reached 40.

1974 – 1985 Created English as a Second Language tutor training program; developed new reading series for learners; helped found The National Coalition for Literacy to increase public awareness of literacy and to increase resources; *Student Involvement Guidelines* published to encourage student involvement in all aspects of literacy programs; literacy practitioners recruited as Volunteers in Technical Assistance (V.I.T.A.s) to assist in developing programs; total number of LVA affiliates reached 125.

1985 – 1991 Creation of *Basic Reading Workshop* video; developed *Tutoring Small Groups Handbook*; *Reading to Children* video training module developed; revision and adaptation to video of the *English as a Second Language Tutor Training Workshop*; produced handbook, *How to Add Family Literacy to Your Program*; pilot tested an affiliate self-evaluation process (later became LVA accreditation); total number of LVA affiliates exceeded 350.

1992 – 2000 *Maintaining the Balance: A Guide to 50/50 Management* published and adopted as organizational management philosophy; first Family Literacy Institute held at national conference; *LVA Works: A Guide to Workplace Education* published; public awareness campaign, Incredible Reading Rally; first Student Leadership Institute held at national conference; launched first Web site; implemented Accreditation Initiative; public awareness campaign, GET AN IDEA™ America Tour; online public awareness campaign, 2000 Reasons America Should Read.

1991 – 2001 In Swaziland, Mrs. Colvin helped with administration, training, and fund development of the country’s only literacy program; assessed the needs, gave initial training, and encouraged the Rotary Clubs of Zambia to set up a “Readers are Leaders in Zambia” fund; in China, trained teachers to incorporate conversational English in their classes; in Papua New Guinea, initiated a literacy program, trained teachers and trainers, and wrote literacy training books in Tok Pisin; trained ten Cambodian women to teach 103 village women who had had no schooling; trained teachers in Madagascar to teach English and was invited to return to start a literacy program in Malagasy.

## Founders

PROLITERACY  
Worldwide

