



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **January 25, 2001**
- CONTACT: Dave Druker
- CONTACT: Randy Nehrt

White Announces Nine New Project Next Generation Sites

SPRINGFIELD —Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White today announced that nine new sites will serve as hosts of Project Next Generation. White started the statewide mentoring program that is run through public libraries last year.

White identified the new sites as:

- Champaign Public Library
- Danville Public Library
- Dixon Public Library
- Macomb Public Library
- Cahokia Public Library District
- Helen Matthes Library, Effingham
- Bensenville Community Public Library District
- Mitchell-Carnegie Public Library, Harrisburg
- C.E. Brehm Memorial Public Library District, Mt. Vernon

"I am delighted to welcome these nine new sites into the Project Next Generation family," White said. "When I ran for Secretary of State, I pledged to create an innovative new mentoring program that would provide positive new learning opportunities for young people. Project Next Generation is the realization of that pledge."

Project Next Generation is a program for sixth through ninth graders. Qualified mentors teach students how to use state of the art computers, the Internet, modems, scanners, and digital cameras, all of which are provided through a grant offered by the Secretary of State's office. At each site, the number of students is limited to between 10 and 12 to maintain an optimum ratio of one mentor per three or four

students. Though a statewide curriculum has been developed to maintain program consistency, individual sites are given flexibility to evolve based on student needs.

"I have had the pleasure of visiting many of the nine inaugural sites which went into operation last year, and those visits were among the most wonderful days I've had as Secretary of State," White said. "Kids are having fun and developing technological skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives. Caring adult mentors are providing guidance and serving as positive role models for participants. And our public libraries are proving to be the ideal environment for such interaction to take place.

"I have worked closely with kids for more than 40 years, and during that time I've learned that kids need mentors. They need older kids and adults to offer them encouragement and pass along valuable lessons about life. Project Next Generation is helping to teach participants how to be good, productive citizens."

The nine new sites join public libraries in Carlinville, Virden, Bethany, Bloomington, Quincy, Elmwood Park and Rockford, and the Kelly and Portage-Cragin branches of the Chicago Public Library, which participated in the first year of Project Next Generation last year.

Jill Rodriguez, director of the Bensenville Community Public Library District, said Bensenville is excited about beginning their Project Next Generation program.

"The Bensenville Library has long been committed to being at the core of creating a community of readers and lifelong learners," Rodriguez said. "For us, teens have been an important link in completing the circle. Technology has enabled us to establish and develop relationships with teenaged youth. Project Next Generation provides us with a wonderful opportunity to serve teens in a way that combines technology with a very personalized approach, something our library believes very strongly in.

"We are excited to begin our program and hope it can serve as a model for others. Jesse White is to be commended for recognizing the need in our communities to reconnect with teens, and for his aggressive approach in funding the Project Next Generation program."

Loretta Lopinot, Director of the Cahokia Public Library District, said "Cahokia is honored to have been asked to participate in Secretary of State Jesse White's Project Next

Generation. We are looking forward to establishing great relationships with the middle school and junior high students who enter the program, as well as with the mentors who work with them. The young people who take part will be helped educationally and emotionally. The equipment and training opportunities offered through Project Next Generation are a tremendous boost to our library."