

# LITERACY

FALL  
2015

# ILLINOIS

**Jesse White**  
Secretary of State  
& State Librarian

As Secretary of State, I have had the pleasure of awarding Adult Literacy programs across the state with grants each year that help learners better their lives through education. Last year, more than 22,000 learners received educational services through a myriad of agencies that participated in our literacy grant program. This issue highlights some learner and program success stories.



Illinois citizens continue to volunteer as tutors at local literacy programs throughout the state. You will be able to read about one such volunteer who not only tutors, but has used his professional knowledge to help make a program even stronger.

As the immigrant population increases, so does the need for educating those who wish to become United States citizens. A local library has established a specific collection of materials to help with citizenship and has incorporated special programming. This example shows the importance of libraries in Illinois and why they are the cornerstone of every community.

Finally, I invite everyone to participate in this year's annual Family Reading Night on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Please encourage your adult program participants to spend time with their children. In this issue, you can find ideas along with book suggestions to incorporate into your event to make Family Reading Night a success.

*Jesse White*

**Jesse White**  
Secretary of State

## Highlights from FY15 grant projects

Secretary of State Jesse White awarded more than \$5.7 million to 154 literacy projects throughout Illinois last fiscal year. Following are descriptions of those awards along with personal success stories.

**Adult Volunteer Literacy** — \$3,940,901 was awarded to 85 programs to provide training for volunteers who tutor adults over age 17 who read, write, compute or comprehend below the ninth-grade level or score below SPL 7 for speakers of foreign languages.

**FY15 Success Story: Albany Park Community Center, Chicago** — Seeking a better education for her two daughters, Khadija immigrated to the U.S. from Morocco in 2012 and shortly after enrolled in Albany Park Community Center's (APCC) Adult Education Program. At APCC, Khadija immediately felt that she was in the right place. "This school is my second home; the teachers are patient and everyone is so nice," said Khadija. Immersing herself in her studies, she quickly progressed from a low intermediate to an advanced ESL class within a year. Additionally, she took advantage of various program offerings, including a CPR certification course, computer training and citizenship classes.

As a participant in the tutoring program, Khadija has spent over 126 hours improving her English and literacy skills and attributes her confidence in speaking to working one-on-one with a tutor. Although her husband suffered a stroke last year, Khadija has persisted with the goal of acquiring her GED to enhance her job prospects and to help support her family. Starting pre-GED classes last year, she is well on her way to reaching that goal, having taken the state-mandated U.S. Constitution exam after only six months of study. Her



Khadija pictured at the computer lab in Albany Park Community Center.

GED teacher recognized her ambition and commitment to learning English and selected her as the first student from APCC to participate in Northeastern Illinois University's Intensive English Program. The intensive 13-week course meets seven hours a day, five days a week. Despite this busy schedule and the college curriculum, Khadija has not been deterred from accomplishing her goals. Not only does she have perfect attendance in the class, but she has also earned perfect scores on each of her exams. With the encouragement of family and APCC staff, she plans to obtain her bachelor's and master's degrees in linguistics.

**Penny Severns Family Literacy** — \$1,582,627 was awarded to 48 programs to provide parents and children – both individually and together – instructional services to enhance their basic reading, math, writing or language skills. Grants are awarded to partnerships

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that include an adult literacy provider, a public library and a child-at-risk organization.

**FY15 Success Story: C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation, Effingham** —

Miriam is an immigrant from Ecuador who is single and raising her three young grandsons on a part-time income. The C.E.F.S. Family Literacy Program offers her services the family needs: English language lessons and parenting support for her, homework help and bilingual reading activities for the boys, and PACT and library events for the family.

The three boys were in kindergarten, first grade, and fifth grade this past school year. Although Miriam had some secondary education in her home country, she was unable to help her boys with their homework; she could not check due dates and assignment directions because of her limited English. The family came to the learning center several times a week during the school year. While Miriam worked on English skills, the boys received homework help. Recognizing the boys' culture and heritage, the tutor had them read books in both English and Spanish, including a Curious George book that included both languages on each page. The C.E.F.S. literacy coordinator was invited to Family Night at the boys' school where Giovanni, Julius and Daniel beamed with pride as they showed off their classrooms, desks and work.

Miriam appreciates the parenting discussions offered in the Family Literacy Program. Her situation is difficult with the language limitations, compounded by being the single head of the family and the only female at home. It is evident that Miriam uses multiple resources available, including the public library, to provide the best environment she can for her three grandsons.

As enrolled clients of C.E.F.S., the family was eligible to receive summer scholarships available from grant money provided to the agency by the Community Services Block Grant Program. The learning center staff assisted Miriam with the applications, and as a result, the boys received park district swimming lessons and summer science lab activities at no cost to the family. Miriam's family and C.E.F.S. collaborate for a successful family literacy experience.



C.E.F.S. Penny Severns Family Literacy Program participant Miriam and her three grandsons enjoy reading together.



Sterling Lumber employee Victor Cazarez (left) receives his class completion certificate from instructor Joe Cichocki (center) and Sterling Lumber COO Mike O'Connell (right).

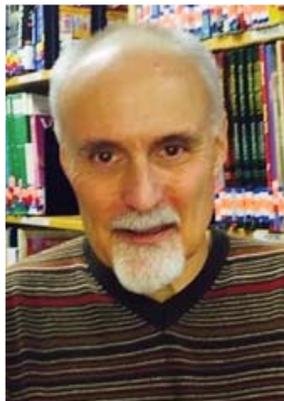
**Workplace Skills Enhancement** — \$231,350 was awarded to 20 businesses and educational providers to offer employees on-site instructional services to enhance their basic reading, math, writing or language skills; maintain their employment; and increase their eligibility for promotion. Grants are matched by the businesses at least one-to-one.

**FY15 Success Story: Sterling Lumber Company, Phoenix** — Sterling Lumber is a family-owned business that is committed to investing in its current workforce by partnering with South Suburban College (SSC)

to provide English language skills instruction. With 90 percent of its employees being non-native English speakers, Sterling Lumber's overall goal is to improve and develop their employees' English skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Sterling Lumber manufactures and supplies crane mats and other industrial lumber products to companies for use in road and building construction. By keeping the manufacturing process of its products in-house, the company is able to produce superior products while eliminating the need for out-

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## Volunteer Profile

Township High School District 214 of Arlington Heights sponsors the Read to Learn (RTL) Adult Literacy Program. Its heavily used library desperately needed organization and ongoing maintenance as site supervisors were constantly borrowing and returning materials as they prepared individualized student lesson plans for their tutors.

Recently, retired librarian and volunteer literacy tutor Michael La Vant stepped up to the plate and took over the organization and management of the RTL collection. Michael comes to the RTL office every Tuesday and Thursday morning to put the library shelves back into good shape and then works on other literacy projects that require attention.

RTL volunteer Michael La Vant.

For example, Michael develops monthly resource packets for the site supervisors to use at the tutoring sites. These packets contain articles on current events and happenings plus related activities, exercises and puzzles. He also assists in materials preparation and is an excellent editor, being a self-proclaimed grammar purist. In addition, Michael oversees the twice annual "Book Fairs," where RTL hosts a Book Swap-Sale-Give Away event to promote reading and literacy.

Michael began volunteering as a RTL literacy tutor in the spring of 2014 at Mount Prospect Library. He has exceeded the required number of tutor training hours, is nearing 80 hours of tutoring adult learners and has accrued over 260 non-instructional hours assisting in the RTL office with the library and other tasks.

Michael has a Bachelor of English and a Master of Library Science with a minor in secondary education. He worked at the Roselle Library for 13 years as a reference librarian. Michael states that research and learning motivate him, "RTL gives you the opportunity to make an impact on a person's life. You can see the results when working with one person." Michael volunteers with many organizations and in many capacities, however, he feels most fulfilled with RTL because he is making a difference in someone's life and can put his acquired skills and expertise to good use.

## Library provides citizenship assistance



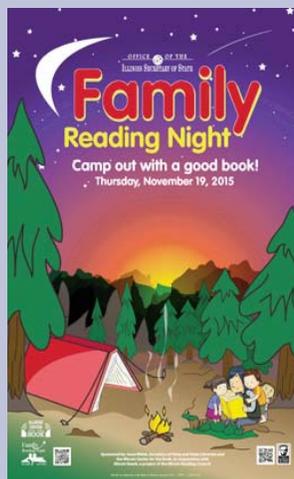
Indian Prairie Public Library District's Citizenship Corner.

Indian Prairie Public Library District in Darien recently created a "citizenship corner" using money awarded through a "Another Opportunity for Back 2 Books" grant from the Illinois State Library. Funds for the grant program were provided by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

Library staff purchased citizenship preparation materials and placed them alongside existing items pulled from the collection into a new, more visible "citizenship corner." The designated area includes brochures to local agencies that help immigrants study for the citizenship test and a computer to access links to citizen-

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## Family Reading Night ideas



Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Center for the Book in cooperation with the Illinois Reading Council once again are sponsoring Family Reading Night. This annual state-wide event encourages families to spend quality time reading together.

This year's Family Reading Night is set for November 19, 2015, with the theme, "Camp out with a good

book!" Get creative in building on the theme. Include ideas such as:

- **Camping/Nature Books**
  - "Maisy Goes Camping" by Lucy Cousins.
  - "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein.
  - "S is for Smores" by Helen Foster James.
- **Camping/Outdoor Experiences**

Set up a campsite with an artificial campfire, tents, sleeping bags, back packs, flashlights, canteens and compasses.
- **Campfire Snacks**

Fill a cooler with apples and juice boxes. Make S 'mores out of graham crackers, chocolate icing and marshmallow cream. Make trail mix with dried fruit and grains. Make ants on a log – celery sticks spread with peanut butter and raisins (ants) sprinkled on top.
- **Camping/Outdoor Activities**
  - Set up a fishing pond with plastic fish, magnets and fishing poles.
  - Hold a scavenger hunt for camping items or animal tracks.
  - Play board games such as Cootie (bug game), Go Fish or Snug as a Bug in a Rug matching game.

For older children, focus on using books to plan a camping trip, gathering camping recipes, routing hiking trails and using a compass.

For more information about Family Reading Night, visit <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/public/frn.html>.

### ILLINOIS ADULT LEARNING HOTLINE

To locate a literacy program or volunteers as a tutor, call **800-321-9511**. You also may register at [www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/hotline/index.html](http://www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/hotline/index.html)



## Make a difference

On Saturday, October 24, volunteers across the nation will unite with a common mission – to improve the lives of others. In its 24th year, Make A Difference Day is a USA TODAY initiative, backed by the Gannett Company. In collaboration with Points of Light, it is the largest national day of community service. Join millions of volunteers around the country, and take this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people in your community by volunteering at a local literacy program. Call the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline at 800-321-9511 to find a literacy program near you, and start your adventure in tutoring adult learners who need help.

## Highlights from FY15 grant projects (Continued from page 2)

sourcing. The company is expanding and would like to promote its current employees to operate a new facility.

Three levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were held at the company: basic, intermediate and higher level English instruction. The goal of each class was to increase the employees' verbal skills and ability to comprehend manuals and safety information without the need of a translator. The company hopes that by providing these opportunities, employees will not only be able to better communicate at work, but also in their personal lives.

One instructor from SSC noted in the final report that the three groups improved their ability to speak, write and read English and were all eager to learn. Another instructor said, "There was not one person who could do it all, but together, the members of the group were competent in furnishing individual pieces of the puzzle, which showed that their English comprehension was both flourishing and growing."

Sterling Lumber's human resource manager noted that the company has already noticed that participants are more comfortable approaching management and supervisors. Management has also seen excitement in the workers, knowing that the company is willing to invest in them.

## Library provides citizenship assistance (Continued from page 3)

ship websites. The collection was promoted through the library website and newsletter, fliers, local newspapers, tutoring groups and neighboring municipalities.

In conjunction with the promotion of the new area, the library hosted two programs. In the first program, a representative from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services gave a Citizenship 101 presentation to 13 people from 10 countries. The program entailed the process of becoming a U.S. citizen and included a mock citizenship interview. Partnering with the immigrant and refugee assistance organization World Relief DuPage/Aurora, the second program provided free half-hour legal consultations on immigrant issues.

In the first year, library staff has seen good circulation statistics of items included in the citizenship collection. With the success of the legal consultations and Citizenship 101 presentation, the library has scheduled additional programming to utilize the collection. The library hopes that by offering these programs and services every year it will be able to give immigrants the resources they need to become citizens.

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## ON THE HORIZON

**November 11-13** – Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition Conference, St. Augustine, FL, [www.leslla.org](http://www.leslla.org)

**November 17-20** – American Association for Adult and Continuing Educator's Annual Conference, Oklahoma City, OK, [www.aaace.org](http://www.aaace.org)

**November 19-22** – National Council of Teachers of English, Minneapolis, MN, [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)

**November 19** – Family Reading Night, the theme for 2015 is "Camp out with a good book!"

**December 2-5** – Literacy Research Association, Carlsbad, CA, [www.literacyresearchassociation.org](http://www.literacyresearchassociation.org)

**January 20-22** – Annual Illinois Comprehensive Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference, Chicago, IL, [www.nl.edu/readingrecoveryconference](http://www.nl.edu/readingrecoveryconference)

**February 15-18** – Learning Disabilities Association Annual International Conference, Orlando, FL, [www.lidaamerica.org/](http://www.lidaamerica.org/)

**February 27-28** – IL TESOL-BE Annual Convention, Naperville, IL, [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)

More literacy event information is available at [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com) (click Departments, Illinois State Library, Literacy, Calendar of Literacy Events).

# WWW



### <http://barbarabush.org>

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy partners with a network of high-performing local family literacy programs that help both young children and their parents learn how to read and write. Supporting family literacy programs is a win-win for parents and children because they acquire basic literacy skills that help them advance their education and provide greater opportunities to succeed.

### [www.familyliteracyprogram.org](http://www.familyliteracyprogram.org)

P.A.L. Family Literacy Program is focused on providing guidance by implementing an effective family literacy program for Bilingual/ELL students. P.A.L. is a research based, data driven program that promotes academic socialization involvement while showing parents classroom strategies used by teachers every day.

### [www.literacyworldwide.org](http://www.literacyworldwide.org)

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers and experts across 75 countries. Its mission is to empower educators, inspire students and encourage leaders with the resources they need to make literacy accessible for all.