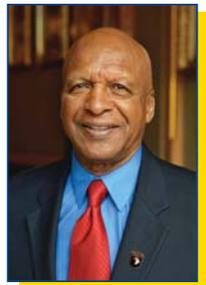


ILLINOIS LITERACY

SPRING
2018

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

Countless libraries, schools and literacy programs throughout the state celebrated Family Reading Night last November with activities that encouraged families to spend time reading together. Along with the Illinois Literacy Foundation, I was honored to spend Family Reading Night at the Addison Library distributing complimentary books to children and families for their home library collections. Thank you to every agency that made this annual event a statewide success.



As State Librarian, it is important for me to acknowledge public libraries in Illinois that are spearheading programs in an effort to help members of their community overcome difficulties in reading, writing and speaking English. In this issue, we recognize select libraries that have made the commitment to providing materials, programming and a locale for adult learners to improve themselves through education. I encourage public libraries to partner with local literacy providers to make libraries the educational anchor of their community.

Celebrate National Volunteer Week April 15-21, by recognizing those individuals who volunteer at your local literacy program. The integral role these volunteers play in providing tutoring to adult learners is invaluable to the success of the Illinois State Library's Adult Literacy Grant Program. I commend each volunteer tutor for his or her selfless commitment toward improving the lives of Illinois citizens through literacy services.

Jesse White

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Secretary of State & State Librarian

Secretary White and the Illinois Literacy Foundation distribute books in celebration of Family Reading Night

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Literacy Foundation (ILF) celebrated Family Reading Night (FRN) with a book giveaway at the Addison Public Library.

Each child and family in attendance at the library was gifted a free book courtesy of the ILF. Throughout the evening, participants enjoyed stories, snacks and crafts. Secretary White was joined by state Rep. Kathleen Willis; ILF President Mike Mroz; and Addison Public Library Director Mary Medjo Me Zengue.

"During Family Reading Night we encourage families to turn off televisions, computers, phones, video games and other electronic devices and spend time reading together," White said. "Reading as a family creates a positive learning environment and helps children develop language skills, comprehension and a love for reading that can last a lifetime."

This is the 26th year the Secretary of State's office has sponsored FRN. For additional information about this annual event, please visit: http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/center_for_the_book/frn.html or contact Bonnie Matheis, coordinator of the Illinois Center for the Book, at bmatheis@ilsos.net.



Secretary White welcomes local children to FRN at the Addison Public Library. Each child received a book to take home courtesy of the ILF.

To subscribe to *Illinois Literacy*, call 217-785-6921 or 800-665-5576 (Illinois only), #3.

Public libraries and the Secretary of State literacy effort

Public libraries throughout Illinois play an important role in educating adult learners and their families. Literacy programs rely on libraries for a full array of library services. Libraries may provide space for one-on-one adult volunteer tutoring or recruit and refer low-literate/English as a Second Language (ESL) adult learners, as well as volunteer literacy tutors. Additional services may include providing family literacy services, offering ESL conversation groups and low-reading level book discussion groups, maintaining high interest/low reading (hi-lo) level and bilingual collections, employing multilingual staff, or providing services and programming in multiple languages.

The following are examples of library and literacy program partnerships that have resulted in exemplary literacy projects. To determine how libraries and literacy programs can work in tandem to address the literacy needs of a community, please contact the Illinois State Library's Literacy office at 217-785-6921.

Bridgeview Public Library – The Arab American Action Network (AAAN) has provided the Bridgeview community with much needed adult and family literacy opportunities since 2010. Bridgeview Public Library strives to be a regular destination for the families in the literacy program by ensuring a welcoming environment for the families to receive free materials and programs. The library offers tours and special programming, such as annual heritage awareness events and weekly family events for children of all ages. Through the partnership with AAAN, the library houses Arabic-language materials for parents and children. Julie Soto, head of the library's youth services, reports that "When a child hears the special melody of their parent's familiar voice reading their native language, they not only build literacy skills, but also deepen the connection to their culture."

The partnership has been mutually beneficial to all involved. Soto explains that "AAAN's recommendation of library programs and materials to their clients has expanded our diverse patron base. The greatest contribution of our partnership is a better understanding of the cultural beliefs and values of the Arab community. The partnership is strong due to the dedication each organization has to improve the lives of families and children through literacy."

Decatur Public Library – The library has actively and directly partnered with Richland Community College's Project READ since 2003 when the literacy program's office and primary tutoring sites were relocated to the library. Project READ's library location allows staff to respond to the diverse and ever-changing needs of the adults and families in the literacy program. The library is a convenient, accessible location for students and tutors.

Students and tutors have easy access to the library's extensive print and audiovisual materials. In addition, the library donated hi-lo books to Project READ. Library staff helps students get



Library meeting space used to educate adult learners and their families.

library cards and works with students who have overdue fines to restore their active library user status.

Project READ benefits by utilizing rent-free space in the library for special meetings and trainings. Library staff refers potential students and tutors to the literacy program, and the Friends of Decatur Public Library supports the program through monetary grants. "The partnership between the library and Project READ is a win-win situation," says Rick Meyer, city librarian. "The missions of the two entities dovetail nicely. The library will continue to value and support the work that Project READ does in our community for adult literacy."

Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin – In 1984, the Gail Borden Public Library District became the official sponsoring agency for the local chapter of the Literacy Volunteers of America, Incorporated (LVA). A space in the basement was provided to house the chapter's office. At the time, the city of Elgin was experiencing a large influx of Hispanic and Asian newcomers to the community. These populations were in need of literacy services, such as ESL tutoring and Adult Basic Education (ABE). The partnership with LVA allowed the library to leverage its services in order to respond to a need in the community. More than 33 years later, LVA has evolved into the Literacy Connection. The organization remains headquartered at the library, but operates independently of the library. Its model of one-on-one training produces highly literate students.

"Economic downturns have the ability to make organizations and individuals rethink everything they are doing," states Sara Sabo, the library's deputy director. "That is exactly what we did. While we continue to support the Literacy Connection, we realized that there were ways that we could augment and supplement them."

Elgin has a large Hispanic population with a significant number of residents still lacking sufficient skills in English to succeed. In order to alleviate the strain of a lengthy waiting list at the Literacy Connection for services, the library began to offer

(Cont. on pg. 4)

FRN activities at literacy programs and libraries

YWCA of Elgin – The Penny Severns Family Literacy program held a morning “reading night” to accommodate families with toddlers, as well as those who were planning on attending reading night activities held that evening at local schools and the library. The day began with a parenting session using wordless picture books followed by reading practice with children at different developmental levels and ages. Blankets were laid out in the gymnasium and parents read with and to their children.

Mt. Morris Public Library – FRN was highlighted with the new collection of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) materials at the library. Participants were able to learn and play with these new items. Families were joined by local celebrity readers, including a local television meteorologist, an elementary school assistant principal and the library board president. The evening concluded with participants creating tree decorations for the Library Bandshell Christmas tree.

Chinese Mutual Aid Association – This association, located in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood, hosted an interactive storyteller who told various stories, including one about a boy who feared eating the chicken “feet” soup at his grandmother’s house. He also taught the children how to juggle balls and scarves. Following the performance, participants were treated with snacks, and each was given an age-appropriate book to take home.

Philo Public Library District – The library invited local children to a reading and pajama party for FRN. Kids wore their pajamas and brought their favorite bedtime buddy to listen to special guests who read bedtime stories. They were also entertained by a local speech group after which they enjoyed a bedtime snack before leaving the event.

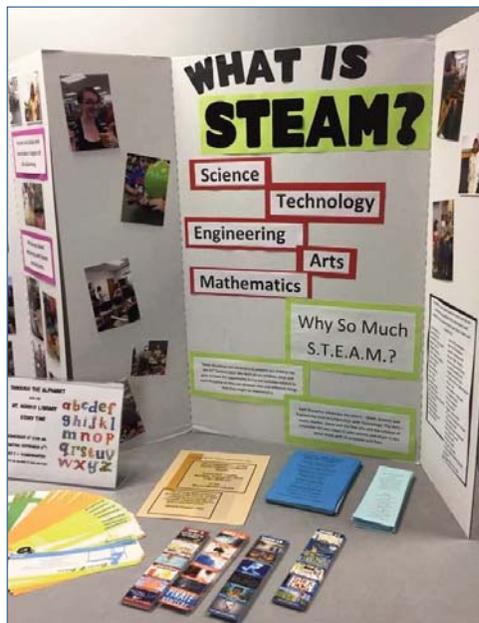
Asian Human Services – This organization, located in Chicago’s West Ridge neighborhood, invited sixth grade children to read their favorite stories to younger children and parents. Families rotated through storytelling stations and also participated in a craft making project. Their choices included making puppets or creating a keychain or jewelry.



A mother and daughter spend time reading and playing together during FRN activities at YWCA Elgin.



A mother and son have fun making crafts during FRN activities at Asian Human Services.



Mt. Morris Public Library set up a booth highlighting its new collection of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) materials during the FRN events at the library.

Celebrate Service

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

April 15-21

Last year, more than 3,000 Illinois residents answered the call to help adults in our state who have difficulties in basic reading, math, writing or language skills. It is our privilege to honor and celebrate those volunteer tutors during National Volunteer Week from April 15-21, 2018.

National Volunteer Week allows organizations the opportunity to thank volunteers who lend their time, talent and support to causes they care about in their community. Their actions and stories inspire others to volunteer. The National Points of Light Foundation proclaimed this year’s theme for the week as *Service Unites* in hopes of capturing the power of individuals who come together to build stronger communities through service.

Literacy programs throughout the state rely on the generosity of individuals to donate their time and talents to adult learners. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer service equates to \$25.95 per hour in Illinois. In 2017, volunteer tutors provided more than \$3.8 million worth of service hours to the Secretary of State Adult Volunteer Literacy Grant programs.

National Volunteer Week was established in 1974 and has grown each year, with thousands of volunteer projects and special events scheduled throughout the week. Be sure to celebrate and recognize the service of your program’s volunteers.

For additional information on volunteering at an Illinois literacy program or to refer potential adult learners, please call the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline at 800-321-9511 or visit: www.the-centerweb.org/alrc/hotline.html.



Warm up to summer reading

Spring weather will soon lead to summer heat, so it is time to begin thinking about a summer reading program. The Illinois Library Association's iREAD Program has selected "Reading Takes You Everywhere!" as this summer's theme. The graphics and programs will focus on the excitement of exploration and new discoveries that can be found in books, libraries, our communities and beyond. Visit its website at <https://www.ireadprogram.org/> to view potential activities.

Summer reading programs can and should include both adults and their children. These programs help prevent learners from experiencing the "summer slide." This is when learning loss occurs because of the lack of engagement in educational activities during the summer. Parents of children enrolled in summer reading programs have reported that the more time their children spent reading over the summer, the more prepared they were for school in the fall. They are also more confident readers. A summer reading club reminds children that reading is for fun, as well as for learning.

Summer reading programming can include activities, graphics, crafts, reading lists, incentives and much more for children, teens and adults. You can develop your own themes and incentives to encourage summer reading or explore statewide and/or nationwide initiatives. Public libraries host annual summer reading programs. Literacy programs are encouraged to contact and work with their local library to coordinate activities or participate together in a program.

Public libraries — (Cont. from pg. 2)

different conversation groups for adults needing literacy services that allowed participants to practice English. In addition, a citizenship conversation group was implemented.

"Gale Borden Public Library District benefits from our close relationship with the YWCA and Elgin Community College," Sabo shares. "Our activities and programs are aligned to help the residents of our community become strong citizens. The public library plays a vital role in making sure that everyone has a chance to succeed through education."

Waukegan Public Library — "Literacy at Waukegan Public Library (WPL) has evolved from a small group of individuals into an organization with a mission and vision," says Gale Grave, the education and literacy services manager at the library.

In 2015, the library adopted the mission of providing a path to empower and support learning and discovery. At the core of WPL's resources, services and space are the ability and capacity to address the functional and cultural literacy needs of its patrons and the surrounding communities. Also in 2015, the library launched its Literacy 2020 Initiative, with the goal of achieving measurable gains in WPL's adult learners by 2020.

For many adult learners in the local community, the opportunities that arise from working with WPL are life-changing. Many immigrants are fearful of government agencies, but feel comfortable to turn to the library for assistance. The library's close proximity to the underserved immigrant neighborhoods, as well as public transportation systems, has turned the library into a beacon for those seeking to improve themselves through learning.

ON THE HORIZON

- **April 8-14** – National Library Week, www.ala.org
- **April 15-21** – National Volunteer Week, www.pointsoflight.org
- **April 21** – On the Road to Literacy Conference, Chicago, IL, www.lvillinois.org
- **April 25-28** – National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Washington, D.C., <http://nctm.org>
- **April 30-May 6** – Children's Book Week, <http://everychildreader.net/cbw>
- **May 4-5** – PTA State Convention, Naperville, IL, <http://www.illinoispta.org/>
- **June 18-20** – National Conference on Volunteering Service, Atlanta, GA, www.volunteeringandservice.org
- **June 19-21** – CASAS Summer Institute, San Diego, CA, www.casas.org
- **June 21-26** – American Library Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA, www.ala.org

More literacy event information is available at www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/literacy/home.html (click Calendar of Literacy Events).

WWW



www.volunteermatch.org

VolunteerMatch is an organization that allows programs to recruit highly qualified volunteers. VolunteerMatch will match individuals who are passionate and committed to your cause and are able to volunteer when and where you need them.

www.nationalservice.gov/vcla

This site is home to the most comprehensive look at volunteering and civic life in the 50 states, as well as 51 cities throughout the country. Data includes volunteer rates and rankings, civic engagement trends and analysis.

www.unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer

Hosted by the United Way, this website allows prospective volunteers to search for opportunities by region, area of interest and activity.

**Illinois Literacy is a publication of the Secretary of State,
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**Jesse White, Secretary of State and State Librarian
Greg McCormick, Deputy Director, Illinois State Library**

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