

ILLINOIS LITERACY SUMMER 2010

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

In May, adult learners gather to celebrate their achievements at the same time school-children celebrate the end of the school year. At the "Night of a 1,000 Stars" events in Chicago, adult learners, their tutors and literacy program staff gathered to hear stories of the learners' accomplishments and allow them a special night to shine. Learners may read aloud, tell their stories or display another talent like poetry. It is a night when they realize that they are not alone in the difficulties they face in becoming literate. A night when they receive the pats on the back they so greatly deserve. This issue celebrates these shining stars as well as other adult learners and volunteer tutors who received 2010 Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards. These individuals serve as an inspiration as to how challenges and obstacles can be overcome and success can be achieved. I applaud each of these learners for their tenacity and determination and their tutors for their commitment to helping them achieve their goals.



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"Night of a 1,000 Stars" celebrates stars of literacy

North Side Literacy Coalition, Chicago

The North Side Literacy Coalition's "Night of a 1,000 Stars" celebration was inspiring. Held May 13 at the Anixter Center, a diverse group of adult learners performed, including students from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States. Performances included a beautiful Indian song, powerful poetry and inspiring personal stories. The evening culminated with adult learners receiving certificates of achievement from Secretary White for their hard work and dedication to learning English and improving their reading skills.

South Side Literacy Coalition, Chicago

South Side Literacy Coalition's "Night of a 1,000 Stars" celebration was held May 19 at Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. More than 100 adult learners, tutors, coordinators, friends, family and honored guests gathered to celebrate. This inspiring event recognized the accomplishments of adult learners and their tutors as well as the important contributions of librarians. June Porter of Literacy Chicago received special recognition for all she does to help adult learners in the area (see photo on page 4).

At South Side's "Night of a 1,000 Stars" event, Veyshon Edmonds (left), manager of Chicago Public Library's Bessie Coleman Branch Library, and Donna Morris, manager of CPL's Hall Branch Library, received certificates of appreciation for their contributions to literacy programs from Secretary of State Jesse White and Craig Davis, director of Adult Services for the Chicago Public Library.



At North Side's "Night of a 1,000 Stars" event, Renuka Sharma (left), literacy coordinator at the Indo-American Center, introduces her ESL students who recited a Nepalese poem with English translation and sang an Indian song.

FY10 Workplace Skills Enhancement Programs

The following companies are examples of the success stories in the Secretary of State's Workplace Skills Enhancement Program.

PCTEL Broadband Technology Group, Bloomington

PCTEL, Inc., designs, develops and distributes antennas for wireless communication. The company partnered with THE CENTER: Resources for Teaching and Learning to proactively develop its production team to meet the challenges of the advances in technology. It has been moving toward using more computer-based communication between departments in order to meet the high-quality standards required in the industry.

PCTEL is a very culturally diverse company. The Workplace Skills grant helped to increase the language skills of employees from India, Cambodia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, San Salvador, Italy and the United States. The employees were able to go to classes at work during company time. They were able to increase their written and oral communication skills to help the company maintain their goal of 100 percent error-proof assembly. The participants attended classes 100 percent of the time unless they were on vacation. During the classes, three of the participants moved to a higher positions within the company.

Berry Plastics, Alsip

Berry Plastics attributes its success to its ability to recruit, hire and maintain a happy and productive workforce. The company believes it is a leader in the plastics industry due to the skills, dedication and creativity of its employees. Berry is committed to a workplace where ideas, energy, teamwork and dedication lead employees on the path to success. In partnership with Moraine Valley Community College, the company has seen 43 employees take advantage of the customized English as a Second Language classes offered through the Workplace Skills Enhancement Grant. The classes have focused on developing employees' communication skills, both written and oral, so they can more actively participate in team discussions and position themselves for career growth. Armando Herrera, Human Resource manager, is excited about the progress employees have made. He sees ESL participants taking a more active role in finding the root causes of problems and offering corrective solutions. "Classes make people want to be successful."

Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge

Employees at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital recently received certificates for completing Workforce English as a Second Language classes this spring. The classes were provided with the support of the Workplace Skills program. The hospital provided a celebration for the participants at the end of the spring session. One of the students gave a short speech describing how when she came to the United States from Poland, she spoke no English at all. When she began taking classes at the hospital in 2008, it was her first time taking an English class. Now, she is comfortable speaking in front of a group.



PCTEL Inc. employees (left to right) Chhean In, Oun Samret and Anna Ortiz attend onsite classes with instructor Karen Fuist from The Center.



Denice Costello from Moraine Valley Community College works with employees at Berry Plastics.



Employees from the Workforce ESL program at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital receive completion certificates from their William Rainey Harper College for Business instructor (center). The employees gave her a bouquet as a thank you for teaching their class.

ILLINOIS ADULT LEARNING HOTLINE

*To locate a literacy program or volunteer as a tutor, call 800-321-9511.
You also may register at www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/hotline/index.html.*

2010 Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards

Secretary of State Jesse White along with Dennis DeRossett, executive director of the Illinois Press Association, presented awards to 10 outstanding adult learners and 10 volunteer tutors at the annual Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards ceremony in May. This year, one family received a Spotlight on Achievement Award. Adult learner winners received \$200 from the IPA Foundation, a plaque and a personalized *Illinois Blue Book*. Volunteer tutor winners received \$200 for the literacy program where they tutor as well as a plaque and a personalized *Blue Book*. Following are highlights of some of the winners. All the winners' stories are available at www.cyberdriveillinois.com (click Programs, Literacy, Adult Volunteer Literacy Program).

Adult learner winner highlights:

Alma Kidd, Common Place, Peoria

Alma was referred to the adult literacy program by the nurses in the hospital where she was recovering from a heart attack. Alma wanted to learn to read books and keep track of her checkbook but her reading and math skills were not up to those tasks. She signed up at Common Place and has been a faithful member ever since. Now she can check out books from Common Place's library. Despite dealing with life-threatening health conditions, her attendance has always been very good. She inspires everyone at Common Place. Alma's tutor, Nita Volz, is a Spotlight on Service winner.

Francisco Nunez, Morton College, Cicero

When Francisco came to this country he could barely understand English. His tutors not only helped him with writing but also helped him understand grammar and improve his pronunciation. After learning some English, Francisco decided to study for the GED. He can now ask for directions, surf the Web, talk to customers at work, understand the radio and TV, write letters, do homework and share information about countries and customs. Less than two years after arriving in the United States, Francisco passed the GED in English and received a scholarship to Morton College. He is well on his way to achieving his personal goal of attaining a bachelor's degree.

Willie Pearl Richardson, Tolton Adult Education Center, Chicago

Willie dropped out of school at the end of 10th grade, got married and became a mother by age 18. She soon had four more children and was working part-time jobs, when she could find work. She had a further setback when a combination of asthma and needed medications caused brain damage and memory loss. The drugs made her lethargic and unable to function well. Her adult children suggested she attend the Tolton Adult Education program. At first Willie was timid but after a few months she began to speak up. She then convinced her doctors to take her off a few of her medications and was amazed at how healthy she could be. She is a mentor for other Tolton students and for teenagers at her church. Her ultimate goal is to earn a GED and become a real estate agent.

Volunteer tutor winner highlights:

Yolanda Higgins, Literacy Volunteers of America, Project U.P.W.A.R.D., Peoria

After retiring, Yolanda was looking for something meaningful to do. She went through Project U.P.W.A.R.D.'s tutor training program and was eager to help someone improve their reading skills. She was surprised when she was paired with a Russian man who needed to learn English. Not knowing Russian, she could have said she would not be able to help him, but she took on the challenge. At first, they used a hand-held translator and flash cards. Still, it was difficult sometimes to explain some words

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2010 Spotlight on Achievement Winners — Standing left to right: Francisco Nunez, Morton College, Cicero; Willie Pearl Richardson, Tolton Adult Education Center, Chicago; Secretary of State Jesse White; Carinna, Victor and Alan Tello, District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights; Teresa Wallace, Southwestern Illinois College-Cahokia Even Start, Cahokia; Dennis DeRossett, executive director, Illinois Press Association. Seated left to right: Kim Cash, Frontier Community College, Fairfield; Breanna Anderson, Peoria County Superintendent/Project U.P.W.A.R.D.; Patricia Arvizu-Rico, DeLaSalle/Tolton Center, Chicago; Alma Kidd, Common Place, Peoria; Jose Maldonado, Anixter Center, Chicago. Not pictured: Rosemary Bielarz, Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights.



2010 Spotlight on Service Winners — Standing left to right: Carolyn Day, Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville; Glenn Fanter, Spoon River College, Canton; Secretary of State Jesse White; Yolanda Higgins, Literacy Volunteers of America, Project U.P.W.A.R.D., Peoria; Diana Howard, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin; Lynne Leonard, Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights; Dennis DeRossett, executive director, Illinois Press Association. Seated left to right: Kathy Lyons, Congregation of St. Joseph/School on Wheels, LaGrange Park; Nicholas Roessler, Anixter Center, Chicago; Kathleen Sayles, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin; Bonnie Schukai, Lawrence Education Center, Springfield; Oneita "Nita" Volz, Common Place Family Learning Center, Peoria.



NIGHT OF A 1,000 STARS — Celebrating South Side’s “Night of a 1,000 Stars” is (left to right) Joanne Jones, chair of the South Side Literacy Coalition; Linda Williams, adult learner at Literacy Chicago; June Porter, adult literacy coordinator at Literacy Chicago; and Beatrice Chappell, adult learner from Literacy Chicago. Beatrice initiated a special recognition ceremony for June at the event.

2010 Spotlight Awards (continued from page 3)

and concepts, but as he learned English, it became easier for both of them. As his English improved, he was eager to become an American citizen, so Yolanda helped him prepare. She watched tearfully when he took the oath to become an American citizen.

Nicholas Roessler, Anixter Center, Chicago

Two years ago, Nicholas’ tutoring experience changed his life. He was a college student majoring in American Sign Language. For a class assignment he was to meet and talk to deaf people for a certain number of hours during the semester. He decided to tutor at Anixter Center and began working one-on-one with a learner who was not only deaf but also lacked any language base. He was eager to learn English and Nicholas was eager to take on the challenge of tutoring him. The adult learner is now able to write so he can communicate with people who don’t sign. He can read what he wants to read without help and has a job and a goal of going to college. Nicholas also has a new goal of teaching in some way for the rest of his life.

Oneita “Nita” Volz, Common Place Family Learning Center, Peoria

Five years ago Nita agreed to tutor a special class for adults with behavioral and developmental disabilities. Nita has earned the friendship and trust of her students by encouraging them to try their hardest to learn new skills. She is very dedicated to and expects a lot from her students and they want to rise to her high standards. She is always looking for new activities to introduce to her class and never fails to inform her students of any activities in town that relate to literacy. Alma Kidd is one of the learners Nita works with and a Spotlight on Achievement winner.

WWW



www.esl-lab.com

Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab includes pronunciation exercises using downloadable audio.

www.kerpoof.com

Disney Online Kerpoof Studios offers a variety of creative, interactive games free. Information is available for teachers and parents.

www.lexile.com/findabook

Find-a-Book provides quick and easy access to a list of books to match a student’s reading level and interests as well as the nearest libraries carrying each title.

www.nelrc.org/changeagent/index.htm

The Change Agent, a social justice newspaper published twice a year in March and September, provides cutting-edge resources for teaching social issues, powerful student writing that inspires discussion, and many ready-to-use lesson plans – all oriented toward a multi-level audience.

ON THE HORIZON

September 8 — International Literacy Day, www.reading.org (click General, Meetings and Events)

September 28-30 — Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, Chicago, www.ila.org

October 7-8 — National Refugee & Immigrant Conference, Chicago, www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/refugee.html

October 13 — Central Illinois Adult Education Service Center Fall Conference, East Peoria, www.cait.org/ciaesc/conference/index.jsp

October 24-29 — American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Clearwater Beach, FL, www.aaace.org

October 27-30 — International Dyslexia Association Conference, Phoenix, AZ, www.interdys.org

November 9-10 — Southern Illinois Professional Development Center Fall Conference, Fairview Heights, www.siu.edu/SIPDC

December 3 — Adult Education Fall Conference Northern Region, Bloomingdale, www.thecenterweb.org/alrc

More literacy event information is available at www.cyberdriveillinois.com (click Programs, Literacy, Calendar of Literacy Events).