Volunteer tutors play a very important role in literacy programs throughout Illinois by providing their unpaid time to improve the lives of adult learners and their families through education. Last year, 5,356 volunteer tutors provided 354,356 hours of tutoring to 11,035 adult learners in Illinois. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer service equates to $28.03 per hour in Illinois. These volunteer tutors provided $9,220,343 in services.

Volunteers are a key factor in the Adult Volunteer Literacy Program in Illinois. Without volunteer tutors, we would not be able to successfully improve the lives of many adult learners,” says Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. “I encourage all programs to utilize National Volunteer Week, April 7-13, to recognize the volunteer tutors in your literacy programs for the selfless dedication and work they provide to citizens who are in need of improving their education.”

Volunteers are an essential part to literacy programs in Illinois. 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. Please take the time to recognize them during National Volunteer Week in April.

I appreciate your commitment to improving the lives of Illinois citizens through literacy services. While these accomplishments are outstanding, demand continues to grow. With your assistance, my office will continue to provide these services to all those in need.

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Fast forward to 2018, and the Kane County Law Library and Self Help Legal Center has facilitated this family-friendly program to over 600 children and their parents. “Judges are great role models,” said Judge Brawka. “It’s important for children to meet judges in a positive light. People often have negative views because of that, we thought it would be great for the children and their parents to have a positive experience with the judges and to see the inside of a courthouse.”

Over 50 children and adults attended the anniversary event and enjoyed hearing stories from retired Chief Judges Judith Brawka and Keith Brown, who reprised their roles in honor of the 20 year celebration. They were joined by newly appointed Associate Judge Salvatore LoPicollo. Each year after hearing stories, children have the opportunity to visit a courtroom and sit behind a real judge’s bench.

Secretary White & Illinois Literacy Foundation attend Family Reading Night

Previous reading programs at the library have encouraged children and their parents to use books as a way to expand children’s experiences of the world. The library’s 2019 winter reading club focused on teaching children about different holidays through reading.

“We believe that reading is a great way to understand and celebrate the diversity of our community,” said Selina Gomez-Beloz, executive director of Waukegan Public Library, echoing White’s sentiments. “We’re honored to have hosted Secretary White and appreciate his commitment to our services for children and especially for adults.” The library’s adult literacy tutoring program, which is the only library-based program in Lake County funded through an Illinois Secretary of State grant, uses one-on-one tutoring and small group formats to help adult learners with their reading, writing and/or math skills.

White left the children with some thoughts about reaching goals, speaking to them about how important it is to persevere through challenges. “If someone tells you that you can’t achieve something, you say – just watch me!” White said, earning applause from the little ones in the front row. He noted that it is the role of parents and community members to help children reach their dreams and that family activities, like reading, can be part of that effort.

White’s visit to Waukegan came six months before the city hosted the 2019 Illinois Reads Book Festival. This will bring a number of authors to Waukegan High School for book talks, book signings, activities and more. For additional information on Illinois Reads, visit the program website at https://illinoisreads.org/.

Electronic literacy resource list addresses volunteers

The Secretary of State Illinois State Library Literacy Office provides an electronic literacy resource list of relevant topics for literacy programs and literacy practitioners to utilize. With National Volunteer Week in April, the Literacy Office would like to promote resources relating to volunteers that appear on the list.

The resource list contains publications, books and scholarly articles ranging from volunteer management, recruitment and retention, as well as outcome evaluation procedures to measure impact. Literacy programs are encouraged to access the list as a resource for volunteers, and to discover many additional topics pertinent to literacy. The resource list is available at: https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/literacy/pdfs/literacy_resource_list.pdf.

Kane County Law Library’s Family Reading Night with the Judges celebrates its 20th anniversary

In November of 1998, Judith Brawka, Keith Brown and Thomas Mueller were the first judges to trade in their robes for pajamas and read bedtime stories to children at the Kane County Law Library’s Family Reading Night with the Judges.

Fast forward to 2018, and the Kane County Law Library and Self Help Legal Center have facilitated this family-friendly program to over 600 children and their parents. From its inception, 47 Judicial Circuit judges of the 18th District have participated in this popular event that attracts families from throughout the community. Law library director, Halie Cox, says she started the program in order to impart a positive image of the law into children’s minds. Cox says, “A lot of people do not have a pleasant initial experience with the legal system and because of that, we thought it would be great for the children and their parents to have a positive experience with the judges and to see the inside of a courthouse.”

The adult education department at Sauk Valley Community College held a family literacy night that provided a variety of activities allowing families to explore how learning to read and write begins at home. The activity stations included: write your own story with circus pictures, read a book with your parents, memory games, crafts and circus storytelling time. The participating parents learned a variety of literacy skills that can help them to become reading role models to their children. All participants received prizes and the children were able to choose a free book to take home.

Secretary White and Illinois Literacy Foundation staff distribute books at Waukegan Public Library’s Family Reading Night.

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Fast forward to 2018, and the Kane County Law Library and Self Help Legal Center has facilitated this family-friendly program to over 600 children and their parents. "It’s always nice to support such an important cause," said Mackenzie Smith, administrative assistant of the Self Help Legal Center. "We’re happy to have the judges and staff from the law library involved in this program, because of that, we thought it would be great for the children and their parents to have a positive experience with the judges and to see the inside of a courthouse."

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"Reading prepares you to be a good citizen," White said, speaking to the group of children, parents and elected officials. "It’s also the foundation for all of our future success."

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Celebrating volunteers during National Volunteer Week in April

http://appreciatevolunteers.com
A blog created by two veteran volunteers to provide ideas for appreciating and recognizing volunteers.

https://www.balancemsb.com/creative-ways-to-thank-volunteers-2902573
Ideas that can help express genuine appreciation to your volunteers can be found at this site. The emphasis is not so much on cost, but the genuineness of the recognition.

From down under (Australia), here are numerous ideas for recognizing your volunteers, from easy daily cost free ways to salute your volunteers, approaches to show that you value their input, to more elaborate recognition concepts.

Illinois Literacy is a publication of the Secretary of State, Illinois State Library Literacy Office. Jessie White, Secretary of State and State Librarian
Greg McCormick, Director, Illinois State Library
To subscribe to Illinois Literacy, call 217-785-6921 or 800-665-5576 (Illinois only), #3.
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Celebrated volunteers during National Volunteer Week in April

April 7-13 – National Library Week, http://www.ala.org/conferences/events/nationallibraryweek
April 7-13 – National Volunteer Week, https://ww2.pointsoflight.org/nvw
April 29 – May 5 – Children’s Book Week, https://www.hsl.org/cbw
May 3-4 – PTA State Convention, Champaign, https://www.illinoispta.org/convention-2019
June 11-13 – CASAS Summer Institute, Orange County, CA, https://www.casas.org/st

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

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