In this issue of Illinois Literacy, I am pleased to announce that literacy programs throughout the state were awarded more than $4.7 million dollars for Fiscal Year 2019 to provide needed services to the state’s most vulnerable residents. This issue also features articles about the success of Illinois literacy programs in Fiscal Year 2018. It is important to assess the impact that Adult Literacy programs have on the lives of individuals, families and workers. The number of individuals we are serving and the changes participants are experiencing are truly extraordinary. We continue to be proud of the work that was accomplished in 2018 and look forward to even more progress in 2019.

Literacy practitioners in Illinois collaborate in the form of councils and coalitions to improve their knowledge, share ideas and advance the field of adult literacy. These groups play a vital role in providing low-cost training and advocating on behalf of Adult Literacy programs in the community. I encourage those involved in adult literacy to join an established organization or look into forming a regional group in their area.

Best wishes for continued success in 2019.

Jesse White
Secretary of State & State Librarian

Secretary White awards more than $4.7 million to literacy projects

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White recently awarded $4,717,205 to 96 literacy projects in Illinois for Fiscal Year 2019, which began on July 1. These projects use 275 different service locations in Cook County, including the city of Chicago, and 734 service locations throughout the rest of the state. This is a 15 percent increase in the number of service locations available to program participants from those utilized in Fiscal Year 2018. More than 12,600 adult learners are projected to be served in 90 Illinois counties. Additionally, 881 children from 711 families will participate in the Penny Severns Family Literacy Grant program. The descriptions of the awards are as follows:

Adult Volunteer Literacy
$3,555,330 awarded to 85 projects to provide training to over 6,200 volunteers who tutor adults over the age of 17 who read, write, compute or comprehend below the ninth grade level or score below SLP 7 for non-native English speakers.

Penny Severns Family Literacy
$1,084,580 awarded to 24 projects that 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 that include an adult literacy provider, a public library and a child-at-risk organization.

Workplace Skills Enhancement
$97,295 awarded to seven businesses that 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 dollar-for-dollar by the participating business.

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

Jesse White
Secretary of State & State Librarian

The Illinois Adult Learning Hotline is the operated by the Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC) in Arlington Heights with funding provided in part by the Illinois State Library Literacy Office’s Adult Literacy Grant Program. The hotline provides referrals to potential adult learners, as well as volunteer tutors, local adult education and literacy programs throughout the state. If you would like to know more about the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline, you can visit the website at www.thecenterweb.org/airc/litline.html or contact Laura Sherwood at lsheerwood@adinamedia.org or 224-366-8822. If you know of an adult learner who needs to improve his/her English ability, prepare for citizenship or work toward a high school equivalency certificate, you can call 801-263-9511. Operators are available Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and are fluent in Spanish, Polish and English.
Fiscal Year 2018 Literacy Program statistics and success stories

Fiscal Year 2018 final reports submitted by programs funded through the Secretary of State Illinois State Library Literacy Office revealed the following statistics. Success stories from each program follow.

Adult Volunteer Literacy
- 11,035 adult learners served
- Average age of adult learner was 41
- 62 percent of adult learners were studying English as a Second Language (ESL)
- 5,355 volunteer tutors provided services to adult learners
- Average age of volunteer tutor was 48
- Volunteer tutors provided 345,355 hours of tutoring instruction, which equates to $22,343 of service, according to the charitable community group Independent Sector.

Success Story: Project READ, Richland Community College, Decatur
After serving 16 years in prison, a man walked into Project READ looking for assistance in improving his math skills to gain higher paying employment. He was quickly matched with a volunteer tutor and scheduled tutoring sessions around his many part-time jobs. In just over two months, he mastered decimals, percentages, ratios, integers, and basic algebra and gained almost five-grade-level equivalents in math. He was offered a temporary job at Caterpillar and became a full-time employee within two months. Doing the homework assigned by his tutor increased his math, organization and time management skills. Mastering the challenges of higher-level math and testing strategies has increased his confidence. Having a job that allows him to be self-sufficient and independent has been instrumental in turning his life around. He is proud that he has become an outstanding role model for his seven children and 10 grandchildren.

Penny Sevens Family Literacy
- 609 adult learners served
- 87 percent of the adults were female
- 82 percent of adult learners were studying ESL
- Average age of adult learner was 33
- 347 participants obtained a library card
- 778 children served
- Average age of children served was 4

Success Story: Asian Human Services, Chicago
A newly immigrated family from Guatemala first enrolled in the Asian Human Services family literacy program in August of 2016. At that time, only the father was working. As with most immigrants, their English skills were minimal, as was their schooling. Neither adult had finished secondary schooling and struggled to assimilate to a new country. The family consisted of two elementary school-age sons and a preschool-age daughter. The sons were enrolled in school and worked very hard on their academics, but struggled to keep up. The parents immediately sought assistance for their children because they were ill-equipped to help.

Over the course of the year, the parents, school teachers and AHS staff worked together to support the children with their academic needs. As the year progressed, their grades steadily improved, and they began to make appropriate progress. Both parents actively participated in Parent and Children Together (PACT) activities, parenting classes and library services. When AHS hosted events, the mother was the first to volunteer to help. All three children enrolled in the after-school program and are now honor roll students. Both parents are gainfully employed. Their success is a testament to their hard work and serves as an example of what the power of education can do for an entire family.

Workplace Skills Enhancement
- 176 employees received instruction
- 51 percent of employees instructed were female
- Average age of employee was 41
- 95 percent of employees studied ESL

Success Story: Sterling Lumber Company, Phoenix, Illinois; South Suburban College, Business & Career Institute
Sterling Lumber Company is a family-owned business that for 65 years has produced industrial lumber, crane mats, crates and pallets. The company’s products are used for major infrastructure projects across North America and the world that provide temporary site access to protect sensitive terrain from damage. The plant in Phoenix employs over 200 local residents who provide in-house manufacturing of the product line, which eliminates costly outsourcing. Partnering with South Suburban College’s Business and Career Institute, the company has provided English-language instruction to employees who are non-native English speakers since 2014 and has benefited greatly through this partnership. Workers communicate better in English and rely less on interpreters.

Recently, a truck picking up lumber inside the factory caught fire and soon became engulfed in flames. Working together, workers were able to extinguish the fire before it spread throughout the building. Company management fully credited the employees’ ability to communicate with each other as the reason the company was able to avert a potential disaster.

Management is also impressed that workers continue to be enthusiastic about attending these classes and believes the promotion of some students to line leads is a direct result of the classes.

Providing professional instruction for its employees has created a higher skilled, cohesive workforce that allows promotion from within the company.

2018 Literacy Program statistics — (Cont. from pg. 2)

Correctional Facilities
Offering literacy tutoring in correctional facilities opens the door to many educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals. For some, it offers an opportunity to provide training to their fellow inmates. To participate in the program, participants must score below the ninth-grade level in reading, writing and math or have very poor English skills.

- Nine literacy programs provided adult basic education or English as a Second Language instruction in local correctional facilities; six programs provided literacy instruction at state facilities; and one program worked with one federal facility
- 257 adult learners qualified and became students
- 98 inmates whose skills exceeded high school levels became peer tutors
- 87 citizens from local communities tutored in correctional facilities

With the restoration of literacy funding in the recent state budget, the coalitions and councils have rekindled their mission and are working to rebuild membership. A plethora of new staff at literacy providers is proving to be a challenge for many agencies.

“Literacy coalitions and councils play an important role in adult literacy by providing support to agencies and individuals that are beginning or continuing their career in adult literacy,” says Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. “I would encourage all literacy practitioners, whether experienced or new to the field, to seek out membership in one of these groups or to explore forming one in their area. The benefit of sharing ideas and resources is immeasurable.”

Current literacy coalitions and councils in Illinois and their contact information:
- Chicago
  - Citywide Literacy Coalition 312-690-4253
  - Northside Literacy Coalition 312-659-1520
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  - Westside Literacy Coalition 773-281-3309
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This year Krinna Shah left her native country of India to join her husband who had previously moved to the United States. Upon her arrival, she was lacking confidence in her English ability, despite studying English in India. She began to search for assistance and discovered the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline.

Midwest Asian American Center was one of the agencies that received the referral report. Vandana Dalal, the agency director, soon contacted Krinna to offer assistance. During their initial conversation, Krinna explained that she could read and write in English and could understand what people were saying to her, but she needed practice speaking and engaging in English conversations. Vandana was soon able to put Krinna at ease because she was able to communicate with her in her native language of Gujarati. Krinna was matched with a tutor, and the pair began meeting on Sunday mornings for English tutoring.

Vandana encouraged Krinna to visit the Schaumburg Public Library, where she obtained a library card and began to take advantage of library services. She attended a number of programs at the library that included classes on digital literacy, resume writing, and job seeking. She soon found employment as a human resources manager at a local information technology consulting and staffing company. With the help of the Midwest Asian American Center, Krinna has improved her speaking ability and her confidence to use English at work. She plans to continue on with her tutoring sessions.

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