26th Annual Tutor & Adult Learner Conference

Awards Program

Welcome
Dorothy M. Miaso, Executive Director
Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

Presentation of Awards

Outstanding Tutors

- Lou Bellande, Jump Start—Literacy Volunteers of Illinois, St. Charles
- Carrie Breitbach, Indo-American Center, Chicago
- Ipara Chase, Indo-American Center, Chicago
- Rey Cruz, World Relief Chicago, Chicago
- Danielle Elliott, Centro Romero, Chicago
- Frey Guerrero, Sunshine Community Services Center—Literacy Volunteers of Illinois, Kewanee
- Helen and Ben Mui, Pui Tak Center, Chicago
- Kate Nadolski, Project CARE—Morton College, Cicero
- Lana Orndorff, Centro Romero, Chicago
- Sandra Ramirez, Project CARE—Morton College, Cicero
- Robert Schroeder, Corazón a Corazón
- Aline and Ed Schultz, Howard Area Community Center, Chicago
- Connie Wong, Pui Tak Center, Chicago

Tutor of the Year

Khadija Lakhtir, Albany Park Community Center, Chicago

Awards Presented By
John McLeod, Board of Directors, Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
Maureen Meehan, PhD, Directory of Community Programs, UIC Center for Literacy (retired)
Our Tutor of the Year Award this year goes to Khadija Lakhtir who tutors English as a Second Language (ESL) at Albany Park Community Center. Khadija is able to relate well to her students because she is an advanced level ESL student as well. She is a pleasure to have as a volunteer at APCC, her nominator Yordanos Gebrekidane states. Khadija relates well with her students and treats them all with kindness and respect. What puts her above and beyond is the enthusiasm with which she tutors her students and the sincere interest she has in their success. She is always sure to engage her students in conversations and figure out their needs and in that way is better able to maximize their success both in and out of the classroom.

Khadija uses questions from the student in order to guide the lesson for that day. Using an innovative technique like this, she is able to create dialogue between herself and the student, as well as answer any questions the student might have about the lessons. While she wants her students to succeed with their test scores, she also wants to ensure that they have a deeper understanding of the ESL material and are able to guide a conversation. Mrs. Lakhtir goes the extra mile and expects the most of herself and therefore often assigns herself homework to prepare for lessons. She will spend time studying and preparing (all the while exhausting all resources and materials) to ensure that her learners are able to get the most out of her lessons. If any issues ever arise with her students, she is sure to make the Volunteer Literacy Coordinator aware of the situation so they can come to a solution. She is very involved with creating the individualized learning plans for her students to work on improving test scores. Khadija is able to have the amount of input she has because of her experience in being an ESL student.

All of her hard work has culminated in high test scores and better acclimation to the Chicago area. In comparing pre and post tutoring test scores using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), there was a vast improvement in every single one of Khadija’s students. While about 60% of Albany Park’s students see a high of a 10 point increase in their scores, all of Khadija’s students achieved that feat. Even outside of the academic world, Khadija helps her students on instruction on different skills such as getting and using a library card, reading medical information, using public transportation, and much more! But her work doesn’t stop there. She has also received additional training in the citizenship process and in helping with mock interviews to help with the citizenship process. She will even go out of her way to help students who are not able to attend classes on the Albany Park schedule or who need additional assistance. Albany Park Community Center is extremely grateful for all the work Khadija has put into their program and are happy to have nominated her for this award!
Outstanding Tutors

Lou Bellande, Jump Start – Literacy Volunteers of Illinois, St. Charles
“Lucky indeed are the students who are tutored by Lou Bellande!” exclaims his nominator, Melissa Auer. Lou has been involved with the Jump Start program for five years now, where he tutors incarcerated youth and his efforts towards tutoring have been recognized by both Melissa, as well as his students. One student comments that he “liked that face that [they] took time out to talk” and that before tutoring he felt “stuck” and “confused”. Lou goes above and beyond to not only help with his students’ schoolwork, but helps mentor and give life advice when possible!

Carrie Breitbach, Indo-American Center, Chicago
Although Carrie has only been at the Indo-American Center for six months, she has made a huge impact on all of her advanced level English students. Carrie’s co-nominators Laura Smith and Renuka Sharma explain that she helps with tutoring in the classroom as well as volunteering outside of the classroom for the betterment of the immigrant community. Carrie is always prepared to include everyone in her lesson plans by bringing a writing sample to class to focus on grammar. Her students are excited about her classes, and one student even exclaims, “I will make sure I NEVER miss class with Carrie!”

Ipara Chase, Indo-American Center, Chicago
When it comes to innovation in the classroom, co-nominators Laura Smith and Renuka Sharma say that Ipara brings out all the stops. In the past year, Ipara has incorporated music and dance in the classroom to tutor over 50 students! Whether she is filling in for English classes at any level or focusing on women’s rights to empower many of the female students to continue with their English learning, Ipara has made a big difference at the Indo-American Center.

Rey Cruz, World Relief Chicago, Chicago
Rey is very committed to his students and tutoring sessions according to his nominator Rachel Greenwood. He has been tutoring at World Relief for two years and has learned how to incorporate pronunciation, vocabulary, as well as measuring improvement all in to his lesson plans. Rey has impacted one particular student who could not read or write at all and can now engage in basic conversation as well as fill out forms with his own information!

Danielle Elliott, Centro Romero, Chicago
Danielle caters to her students’ individual needs by engaging them in thoughtful questions. She recently had a student who after just two short tutoring years has been able to pass the math, social studies, and constitution portions of the GED due to their hard work together and Danielle’s motivation in his studies. Her student is now even involved in a city college culinary bridge program! Danielle’s nominator, Debbie Kapustka, says that she “is definitely passionate about her volunteerism and she has shown that she is truly committed, interested, and dedicated to her students’ success.”

Frey Guerrero, Sunshine Community Services Center – Literacy Volunteers of Illinois, Kewanee
Frey has only been with Sunshine Community Services Center for five months as an AmeriCorps member, but has already connected with many of his students. He is so dedicated to his students that just a week after surgery, Frey returned to the classroom, despite needing crutches. One special connection Frey has made was with one of his very disorganized students. He helped her organize all of her schoolwork and has improved upon all of her once failing grades. Frey’s nominator, Etta LaFlora, states that Frey is always calm with his students and they really rely on him for his tutoring expertise.

**Helen and Ben Mui, Pui Tak Center, Chicago**
Helen and Ben join the Pui Tak Center as a tutoring duo and as nominator Annikka Bouwsma puts it, “We are very happy to have both Helen and Ben serving in our program!” Helen and Ben put forth the extra effort to make sure their students really understand what they are saying, rather than just regurgitating answers. The twosome even had a student recently pass her citizenship test! While Ben originally came to help his wife Helen who is currently studying to get her Master’s degree in TESOL, they now both tutor on their own in addition to as a pair.

**Kate Nadolski, Project CARE – Morton College, Cicero**
Kate is a tutor that definitely takes the needs of the student into consideration when catering lesson plans. She considers all of her students’ learning styles and adjusts her lesson plans for both her one-on-one tutoring as well as her small group ABE class. By individualizing her teaching styles, she is more easily able to put herself in her students’ shoes and therefore better help them. Irina Cline states that Kate encourages her students to always speak in English, even if they make mistakes so they can practice their grammar and vocabulary.

**Lana Orndorff, Centro Romero, Chicago**
Dena Giacometti says of her tutor nominee that she constantly demonstrates reliability and flexibility. She never misses a day with her student and makes sure to cater her lesson plans to her student. Although she is already busy with her one student, when she was approached about tutoring more students, she was eager and enthusiastic!

**Sandra Ramirez, Project CARE – Morton College, Cicero**
In the words of her nominator Irina Cline, Sandra is “an exceptional group tutor.” Sandra states that the key to teaching her group sessions is finding the balance between all the different English levels by finding activities that can be modified to work for everyone. The proof of her hard work is in her students’ test scores and self-confidence. Sandra makes sure to always encourage her students and can relate to how they are feeling because, as she told them, it is how she felt 11 years ago.

**Robert Schroeder, Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island**
Technology is a tutor aid that Robert incorporates into his tutoring sessions. He is always ready to tutor in innovative ways to help get the best results possible. According to Robert’s nominee, Margarita Silva, “Robert is an excellent teacher which translates to being an outstanding tutor.” He excels at adjusting his lesson plan if necessary, and is one of Corazón’s most reliable tutors. Because of his love of tutoring ESL, Robert has accepted an offer to teach English in South Korea!
Aline and Ed Schultz, Howard Area Community Center, Chicago
Referred to as “The Couple That Tutors Together” by their nominator Maxine Bailey, Aline and Ed Schultz divide and conquer at Howard Area to cover all sorts of tutoring: while Ed tutors an ESL student, Aline works with an ABE student. Aside from their tutoring sessions, the pair also helps with a weekly job readiness workshop. Through acting and role-playing, Ed and Aline are able to engage their students who are often limited English speakers in an innovative way that gets everyone involved!

Connie Wong, Pui Tak Center, Chicago
“Connie is a joy to have as a volunteer in our program!” says nominator Annikka Bouwsma. Connie develops close relationships with her students that are desirable for any tutor-student pair! She is always willing to accommodate her tutoring to the needs of her students to provide better contextual learning or to base the tutoring on what learning style works best for them. Connie is a tutor that is always looking ahead for resources for different challenges and is one of Pui Tak’s “most dedicated tutors”!