



# VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



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## **Final Quarterly Members Meeting**

Friday, June 5th marked the final quarterly meeting for this year's VOCAL AmeriCorps members. As usual, the members shared updates and answered questions about their work and programs. In addition, we were introduced to the new "Summer of Service" AmeriCorps members, and we had the chance to hear everyone's post-service plans. The next steps for members included another year with AmeriCorps, graduate school, another position in non-profit work, and currently undecided.

After these updates, Maya Marshall led a stimulating discussion on Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," which prompted questions primarily about equality - its definition, how it plays out in society, and whether it is even possible to achieve. Though we did not come to a consensus on any of these topics, we raised a rich variety of opinions and arguments that helped us all think about equality in new ways.

This final quarterly meeting further exemplified the consistent caliber of the AmeriCorps members. Each quarter this is evident in each person's commitment to their students and sites, in their intelligence and compassion in discussions, and in their humor and personalities. I think each of us would agree that it has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve together this year.

*Sophie Bouwsma, Pui Tak Center*



*The IYC AmeriCorp members  
from St. Charles and Kewanee*



*LVI Executive Director Dorothy  
Miaso leads the meeting*

## From the Executive Director ...



### LVI STAFF

Dorothy M. Miaso  
*Executive Director*  
Chamala Travis  
*Program Coordinator*  
*VOCAL AmeriCorps*  
Melissa Auer  
*Program Coordinator*  
*IYC-St. Charles*  
Julie Copher  
*Program Coordinator*  
*IYC-Harrisburg*  
Debra Sundberg  
*Program Coordinator*  
*IYC-Kewanee*

### AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Wendy Huang  
*Literacy Volunteers of Illinois*  
Etta LaFlora  
*IYC-Kewanee*  
Peter Liebenow  
*IYC-St. Charles*  
Teresa Urfer  
*IYC-St Charles*  
Pat Wright  
*IYC-Harrisburg*

### BOARD MEMBERS

Alex Crevi  
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Madison Palmer  
Don Singer  
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### NEWSLETTER

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*Editor*

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As we announced on our Facebook page and in an e-mail to host sites last week we were officially renewed for another year of competitive funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service for the VOCAL program. We were one of 327 programs nationally to be awarded the funding and one of eight in Illinois. Our goals for the coming year remain unchanged, but there are a few changes that members may welcome: raises in both the living allowance and the educational award. Living allowance will go up \$430 for full-time members to \$12,530 and \$200 for part-time members to \$6,300. The education award will also be increased to \$5,730 for full-time members (an increase of \$85) and \$2,865 for part-time members (an increase of \$43). Our member number count remains the same – 22 FTEs (full-time equivalents), which we anticipate will be 16 full-time members, 10 part-time members and 5 minimum-time members. Recruitment of members and host sites for the coming year is underway, the program year will begin September 1<sup>st</sup>.

As we look towards the coming year, we again thank all for being a part of the current year—especially the 38 individuals who enrolled as full-time, part-time and Summer of Service members, the supervisors at the eighteen sites who hosted the members, and, of course, our program funders—the Serve Illinois Commission and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

These are tense times in government with funding for human and social service initiatives being especially threatened. So it is with both of our funding bodies. While it is early yet in the budget-making process and full details are not yet available, the information so far provided indicates that the US House is proposing drastic cuts in AmeriCorps and the CNCS administrative budget, and is eliminating support grants to State Commissions. While we cannot lobby against the cuts or advocate increases, we can educate elected officials on the impact that the program is having on your communities and I urge you to share as many of those stories as you can with your Congressman and our two US Senators.

## Fun Things To Do

### FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS

**Saturday, July 4, 2015 at 9:30 PM**

The city of Chicago ditched its official fireworks show a few years back, but Navy Pier picks up the slack with its explosive Independence Day celebration. Head down to the pier or Millennium Park for an up-close view, but if you're not a fan of crowds, just hit the lakefront or find a friend with a rooftop by the shore. Free

### TASTE OF CHICAGO

**Wednesday July 8 2015 — Sunday July 12 2015**

Since 1980, Grant Park has been hosting what has become the granddaddy of food festivals. Trade your tickets for a taste of Chicago's street fare and listen to music at Petrillo while you devour your turkey leg, rainbow cone or deep dish pizza. Free entry

### MILLENNIUM PARK MOVIES

**Every Tuesday, June 23— September 1, 2015 at 6:30 PM**

Buy your grub, grab a seat and sit down to see a special movie favorite on a 40-foot screen at the [Millennium Park Summer Film Series](#). Free.

## National Honors for Budding Poets

Each month, the Jump Start Programs at the Illinois Youth Centers sponsor writing contest. For April it was poetry at IYC Harrisburg. The topic the young men were given to guide their writing was “Transformation”. Four submissions were received, three of which chose to participate in the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS) poetry competition. The contest guidelines were the same as the national contest guidelines: 50 lines or fewer and original writing.

There were 1,303 submissions nationally from 156 juvenile facilities in 34 states. During the month of May, the judges narrowed that down to 150 poems, then down to the top 15 poems from which a 1<sup>st</sup> place winner, two 2<sup>nd</sup> place winners, two 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners and four honorable mentions were named. Though none of the Jump Start submissions from Harrisburg or Kewanee - which held a similar contest during April - took one of the top prizes, two poems from Harrisburg and one from Kewanee were selected to be included in the CEEAS 2015 *Words Unlocked Anthology*, one of which is below.

What a great thing to have your poem published!!!

*Julie Copher, Member Supervisor, IYC-Harrisburg*

### Survival Throne

I remember growing up  
small house with two rooms  
cardboard with broke brooms  
dark nights with just the moon  
five bowls with only two spoons  
in the kitchen no table  
eating cereal, generic labels  
on the floor on newspapers  
getting water from the neighbors  
three brothers one sister  
big brother- looked up to him  
lil' brother- looked up to him  
they were high so I couldn't view 'em  
twin brother- looked up to him  
baby sister looked up to her  
they were high so I couldn't view 'em  
not the size  
and not they mind  
I was doin'chores that wasn't mine  
if its shiney, I must shine  
I tell the truth and it's still a lie  
welts on welts on my behind  
oops they miss – they on my eyes  
been through so much it's hard to cry

even when my closest homie died  
moved to the streets just to survive  
I keep a gun just to survive  
I sell these drugs just to survive  
every year I do a bid  
when I get out I do it big  
to see twenty-one it's very slim  
the crazy thing I got a kid  
I know he hate the way I live  
and son I hate the way I live  
he been in this world for two years  
but I only known him for half a year  
I make twenty dollars off a crum  
one day the feds gone come  
and one day a change gone come  
I'm reaching for it like a plum  
hopefully it's the right one  
it's not where your from it's where you've gone  
getting rich is taking too long  
but it's alright I got a new home  
my mom healthy with a new home  
she sound happy when we on the phone  
I try to make rights out of wrongs  
since a child I've created this throne.

*- Student at the Illinois Youth Center-Harrisburg*

## Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at St. Charles

As volunteers at IYC-St. Charles, we don't expect praise for the time we give freely to help those in need. Our only hope is that we can make a difference in the lives of the youth that are incarcerated there. Yet, it is always good to know that we are appreciated for our efforts.

On Wednesday, June 3rd, volunteers were honored at St. Charles' Appreciation Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. We were personally thanked by Superintendent Jeff Bargar, who also served as the featured speaker as well as by the Center's new Assistant Director of Programs, Stephanie Lawson, who also addressed the gathering. Guests were served delicious grilled hamburgers and hotdogs, homemade pasta salad, fresh fruit and cupcakes.

According to Chaplain Elmore, who serves as the Center's Volunteer Coordinator, there were 110 volunteers from 21 different groups who donated over 5,000 hours in the past year. With 25 tutors, our Jump Start program accounted for nearly a fourth of the Center's volunteers. And, with 700 hours of tutoring we provided 15% of the donated time. While our program provides reading, writing, and math tutoring, plus GED and ACT prep, some of the activities provided by the Center's other volunteers include bible studies, religious mentoring, substance abuse support groups and sports and other leisure time activities.

At St. Charles honoring the volunteers and choosing a Volunteer of the Year is a long standing tradition that has spanned over the past 20 years. This year's honor went to Maura Smith, who it was noted "is known for her care and concern for youth who often request to be in her bible study sessions". Some of the recent past recipients of St. Charles' Volunteer of the Year Award who were Jump Start tutors include—Richard Strohm (2007), Dot Read (2008), Don Martin (2009), and Byron Eden (2012), who also served as a "minimum-time" AmeriCorps member in 2010 and 2011.

*Teresa Urfer, IYC-St. Charles*

### Literacenter's Grand Opening

The grand opening of the Literacenter at 641 W. Lake St. Suite 200 was on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> from 12 - 6pm. Now what is the Literacenter? It's the country's first shared nonprofit workspace dedicated exclusively to the cause of literacy.

Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition (CCLC) recently moved in where we are now neighbors with other literacy organizations including Literacy Works, Chicago Literacy Alliance, Working In The Schools, Open Books and more.

During the Grand Opening, there were many things going on – Alderman Walter Burnett Jr. kicked off the event by circling "Now Open" on the word search poster, roving musicians greeted visitors, and throughout the day, I got to talk to various people about my organization. Some guests even brought along their pets! The day was filled with games, performances, dogs and tours.

*Yoselyn Ovalle, Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition*



CCLC Executive Director Becky Raymond with AmeriCorps member Yoselyn Ovalle at their new office

## Guest Speaking at the Senior Corps Volunteer Training

On Monday, June 15th, Chelsea Dennis and I were given the honor to present our experiences as LVI AmeriCorps members at the Senior Corps Chicago Foster Grandparents Program Volunteers event held at the Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building. It was an annual training sponsored by Chicago Department of Family & Support Services (CDFSS) who asked guest speakers to share ways to effectively mentor/tutor youth in the Chicago Public School system.



We had a large and enthusiastic crowd during our presentation. Chelsea and I talked about our sites – Albany Park Community Center and the Illinois Youth Center at St. Charles, the people we work with, and explained some of our methods to provide literacy and educational support. I gave the example of a youth I taught who had learned basic math by using dominoes pieces to keep score. Chelsea completed an incredibly large group exercise with the volunteers, and even prepared game exercises such as “BAM” and “fly swatter” to teach sight words to children.

Our day ended with a panel discussion featuring all the guest-speakers from the day’s training sessions and Q&As. It was a packed house! Everyone on the panel had a chance to answer questions, and were thanked for being there.

Thank you, Senior Corps Foster Grandparents, for having us as guest speakers!

*Pete Liebenow, IYC at St. Charles*

## APCC’s Evening of Empowerment Annual Fundraiser

The Albany Park Community Center held its annual Evening of Empowerment on Wednesday, June 17th at the Copernicus Center. Over 150 generous APCC supporters enjoyed a great event and raised over \$29,000 (exceeding any single event or campaign in our 40 year history) to support targeted programs and facility improvements at our multiple locations across the city!

After a delicious dinner prepared by Smoque BBQ, guests then took to the silent auction tables where coveted items such as gift cards to Revolution Brewery, White Sox tickets, and the Goodman Theater were bid upon and fought for! Guests also had the opportunity to purchase handmade bracelets designed by adult learners at our Kimball location.



APCC’s Director of Development Casey Smagala and Executive Director Rodney Walker presenting the Commitment to Service Award to winners

APCC supporters had the opportunity to hear from APCC Distinguished Alumni Awardee Josephine Lee. Ms. Lee, a former Head Start student at APCC and now the President and Artistic Director of the Chicago Children’s Choir gave a tear-jerking account of how her time at the center inspired her commitment to diversity today. With that, guests then showed an outpouring of support by raising more than \$2,500 to purchase a new air conditioner for our Head Start programs. We offer endless thanks to our supporters for making this event so successful. We are so lucky to have such an amazing and supportive community base.

*Chelsea Dennis, Albany Park Community Center*

# Member Spotlights — Jump Start IYC Harrisburg



**Pat Wright** is a Literacy Specialist at the Illinois Youth Center at Harrisburg.

A native of southern Illinois, Pat grew up in Harrisburg and attended Southeastern Illinois College, graduating with an Associate Degree in early child development. This is her second year with the Jump Start program.

Before AmeriCorps, Pat worked for 10 years with developmentally handicapped adults and as a part-time AmeriCorps member is able to continue that work on a part-time basis with Coleman Tri County in southern Illinois. She typically spends six hours a day at the IYC, spread over two or three days. Her greatest rewards, she says, is when she sees students learn and get what she calls “a light in their eyes” that they have accomplished something and met a goal. Pat says it is equally rewarding for her to see their progress. Her biggest challenge is to keep the students interested in the work and keep up their interest and not get bored.

Pat’s avocation is cooking, specifically baking. She has four sisters and one brother who love her cakes. Everybody’s favorite is a Red Velvet Cake. If they don’t visit her at home, she bakes and takes the cake to them. At home is her retired husband, daughter and two grandsons.

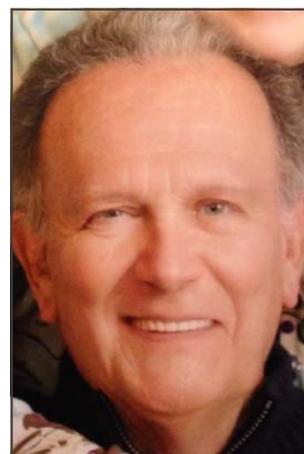
In the future, Pat hopes her path will include teaching and tutoring. There are far more rewards than challenges, she says. Teaching is just in her DNA and she hopes to do it always.

**Larry Durfee** joined the Jump Start program in May as a “full-time/quarter-time” Literacy Specialist at IYC-Harrisburg. Larry came to LVI highly recommended — Pat Wright is his sister!

Larry grew up in Harrisburg and attended Shalum Bible College in Des Moines, Iowa where he received his B.A. in Christian Education and his M.A. in Christian Administration.

While Larry’s career has been varied, most of it has been in education where he served as a teacher as well as a school administrator. It was his hands-on work with students that inspired him to join AmeriCorps. At the IYC, Larry tutors his students in reading and math, and he enjoys seeing the students succeed. His biggest challenge is deciphering the different moods of the students from day to day.

Larry is looking to continue his AmeriCorps service into the next program year. In his spare time, Larry enjoys reading and camping. In the future, he hopes to be traveling somewhere.



## Jump Start at the Illinois Youth Centers

Jump Start is a program of the Literacy Volunteers of Illinois that recruits retirees, especially retired teachers, to serve as tutors and mentors for youth incarcerated in the Illinois Youth Centers. The program was begun in 1995 through funding from the Retirement Research Foundation and support from the Illinois Retired Teachers Association. Current support comes from School District #428 of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ), the Illinois State Library Literacy Office, small businesses and individual contributors.





**Mary Gynelle Baccus** joined the Jump Start team at IYC-Harrisburg in mid-May for a Summer of Service, which has her serving as a full-time tutor through August.

Mary grew up in Harrisburg but now resides in nearby Carterville. She attended the University of Evansville in Indiana where she received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Later, she attended the University of Illinois where she got her Master of Science in Nursing, and then Southern Illinois University (SIU) in Carbondale for her PhD in Higher Education.

Before retiring and ultimately joining AmeriCorps, Gynelle taught nursing at SIU for 30 years. She joined VOCAL to help others and, she notes, to keep her brain challenged.

At the IYC, Gynelle enjoys the reward of helping the boys learn. Among the challenges she faces is the noise disruption that comes from the PA system, the ringing of the telephone and the chatter of other people.

After her Summer of Service, Gynelle plans on returning to retirement or looking for a new challenge. As to where she sees herself in the future, she says “[somewhere] always learning something new!” Her hobbies include spending time with her granddaughter, participating in community theater, photography and reading.

**Brandon Thom** is the newest Summer of Service member at IYC-Harrisburg having joined the program in early June. He will serve full-time through August.

Brandon is a Harrisburg native where he attended Southeastern Illinois College and majored in Accounting. He had just completed his Associate in Science Degree when he heard about the tutoring opportunity in the Jump Start program from another AmeriCorps member who referred him for the position. Since joining the team Brandon has mainly been tutoring students in math.

For Brandon, one of the rewards of tutoring is knowing that he is helping his students improve themselves by helping them complete their education. Some of the challenges he’s faced are being patient and making sure his students make progress by staying on track, which for the most part, hasn’t been a problem.

After his term of service, Brandon plans on either renewing for a full year of tutoring in the Jump Start program, or finding a full-time job at a bank. Future plans include getting a BA in Accounting and working as a bookkeeper at a hospital. Hobbies include spending time with friends, playing sports, and relaxing at home.



# Happy Birthday!

Kathryn Waldron (7/3)

Patricia Wright (7/20)

## Fun Facts

This year the Summer Solstice fell on June 21, 2015 at 11:38 am CDT, a day that brings the most daylight of the year.

As the northern hemisphere tilted towards the sun, all those living there had seen an increase of 15-hours of daylight during this time.

Coincidentally, it also made this year's Father's Day as one of the longest in history.

[www.Space.com](http://www.Space.com)

## Upcoming Dates

**Thursday, July 9th**

*Fun at the Cell*

11:45 a.m. - Tailgate

1:10 p.m. - Ball Game

*Compliments of the Chicago White Sox  
and Major League Baseball*

**Friday, August 21st**

*End of the Year Celebration*

4:00 p.m.

## LVI's SOCIAL NETWORKS

FOLLOW US ON 

[www.Twitter.com/LVillinois](http://www.Twitter.com/LVillinois)



All our photos can be found on Facebook, so remember to "Like" us when you visit [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com).

Links to both social media are also on the LVI homepage.

## Tutor Tips

### Ways to Encourage Students to Write

- Before you begin, what kind of goals are you setting up? An essay to pass the GED test? Letters to family and friends? Emails at work? Maybe they're lists for organizing.
- When students write about a topic they know and care about, their motivation and ownership increase. Prompt them with topics that they are comfortable with and have knowledge of, like hobbies, life stories and more.
- Have your students read their writing aloud to you. Start by focusing on reading, giving positive feedback and understanding what they want to say, evaluation comes later.
- Writing takes time and concentration, and the only way to get better is to practice. Integrate writing tasks to not just the classroom, but daily life tasks like in journals, lists, and letters.

Tips are from [AdultLiteracyTutor4.blogspot.com](http://AdultLiteracyTutor4.blogspot.com)