



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



END OF THE YEAR DINNER

On Friday August 22nd, Literacy Volunteers of Illinois invited AmeriCorps members and their site programs to celebrate the end of the eighteenth year of the AmeriCorps VOCAL program. For some, the dinner was a reward for a year's worth of good work, and for others, it was one last chance to socialize with new found friends before they lead their separate lives.



It was a night to be remembered as guests dined on a 6-course meal that started with flaming Saganaki and ended with sweet Baklava and coffee. Executive Director Dorothy Miaso kicked off the celebration by expressing her gratitude to all of the members. She announced that in this past year, the program has provided service to 1, 286 people, and through the Jump Start program, 231 teens were served. Most notably, volunteers met and surpassed goals in volunteer recruitment and service hours! Following her speech, the "Year in Review" slideshow was presented. It showcased photos of members at past events such as Days of Service, member training, quarterly meetings and the White Sox game.



Wrapping up the night, Dorothy Miaso was joined by Board Treasurer John McLeod at the front of the room to recognize all volunteers by presenting certificates and pens. LVI volunteers have dedicated thousands of combined hours to bring literacy and change to communities throughout the state of Illinois. Whether they are beginning another year with LVI or starting on a brand new journey, this night brought the volunteers together to look at all the amazing change they have created.

Rufino Salgado, Instituto del Progreso



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
President

John McLeod
Treasurer

Blake Dunphy
Carol Morris
Madison Palmer
Don Singer
Maria Thiel
Diana Turowski

NEWSLETTER

Wendy Huang
Editor

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
30 East Adams, Suite 600
Chicago, IL 60603
P: 312.857.1582
F: 312.587.1586
lvillinois.org
info@lvillinois.org

From the Executive Director

We've hit the year-end mark for most of our members and I thank thank you all – members and host sites alike - for being a part of our 2015 VOCAL- Volunteer Outreach for Community Action in Literacy - program.

This is our last issue of VOCAL News for this program year and in it we feature our final Summer of Service members. We also are listing within this issue the full "Class" of 2015.

We were sorry that the full corps was unable to join us last Friday at our End of the Year Celebration, and, as you saw on the front page, those of you who were unable to attend had missed a great time!

As you leave AmeriCorps service and move onto work, school and other endeavors we need to remind you, especially those of you who received health insurance through the AmeriCorps program that you will need to secure coverage on your own, as is required under the Affordable Care Act. You can satisfy this by purchasing insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace or by gaining coverage through a spouse, parent or new employer. If you are purchasing insurance on your own, you will likely qualify for a health care subsidy. All of that information can be found on the Marketplace web site.

For those of you anxious to use your educational award, complete your End of Service form as soon as possible so we can exit you and get that process of accessing the Ed award going. For those not using the award right away remember you only have seven (7) years to use it and while that sounds like a long time now, you may be surprised at how quickly time flies!

Again, on behalf of the LVI staff and board, I thank each of you reading this for being a part - or a supporter - of our VOCAL program, especially our two funding bodies - the Serve Illinois Commission and the Corporation for National and Community Service.



Bowl...for America

Bowling Night

DIVERSEY ROCK 'N'

BOWL

Cocker's

All AmeriCorps members (incoming/current/alums) and non-profit partners are welcome to attend!

Diversey Rock N' Bowl - 2211 W Diversey
Thursday, August 27th
6 - 8pm

RSVP - americorpsalumschicago@gmail.com or [click here](#)

Fun on the Job

As an AmeriCorps member, one of my favorite things about working at World Relief Chicago is the opportunity to bring creativity into the classroom. Throughout July, I had the opportunity to participate in two class simulations that helped our ESL students learn more about how to find and keep a job.

The first activity was a general job simulation that was designed to walk students through the process of finding a job. Students began by reading a classified ad, filling out an application and talking about past, personal and employment experiences. I acted as one of five “hiring managers” and asked questions, gave feedback on job applications and sometimes I’d simulate a “rejection” with silly reasons drawn out of an envelope in order to show students the need for persistence when job hunting. Students also played games where they had to pick appropriate and inappropriate interview outfits and practiced calling in sick.

The second simulation was a restaurant scene that emphasized the joys and woes of working at a restaurant. Students arrived to find the classroom decorated as a café and a “host”—one of the teachers—would seat them at a table with a menu. We took their orders and prepared actual food for our students. Then it was the students’ turn! The teachers and I pretended to be customers and the students acted as hosts and waiters/waitresses. Afterwards, everyone had a food discussion with questions like “What kind of food do you eat for breakfast in your country?” It was hard to know who had the most fun during these simulations – the students or me!

Kathryn Waldron, World Relief Chicago



Hamida and Fatiha filling out job applications.



Centro Romero's Summer Family Program

With the last session of the FY '15 came Centro Romero's annual summer program. This volunteer-based program began as a way to serve students who didn't want to suffer a three-month gap in-between classes.

As our Summer Family Literacy Program occurred throughout July, parents took ESL classes and their kids participated in Chicago Public Library's Summer Reading Program. Since it was summer, we also took quite a few field trips — we collected shells on Lake Michigan, had a picnic at Maggie Daley Park and dove into the deep end at Whealan Aquatic Center!

Our summer program came to a close at the end of the month and now we are just about ready to get back into the swing of things in preparation of the Fall session!

Katie Maranzana, Centro Romero

CCLC's Final Quarterly Member Meeting



On Tuesday, August 4th, Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition held their final quarterly meeting for the 14-15 program year at the Literacenter. The highlight of the meeting featured Dr. Philip Hong from Loyola University who gave a presentation on self-sufficiency and introduced a newly developed social work model called the "Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP)" model.



Dr. Hong's presentation gave an in-depth analysis on what self-sufficiency means so Adult Ed providers can develop bottom-up strategies to empower low-income individuals and families. The goal of the TIP model works to empower students and help them develop self-awareness, confidence, hope, goal-orientation, leadership and more as they navigate a career path. It allows students to feel employment hope, and recognize then overcome their perceived employment barriers as students aim to advance in the workforce.

Yoselyn Ovalle, Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition

Discover Literacy Fair at Anixter Center

On Thursday, August 6th Anixter Center's Jack Ehrlich Literacy Program celebrated their first ever Discover Literacy Fair. The event was a result of months of hard work from both staff and client participants, and we were rewarded when new and old faces came out to learn about what our program has to offer.

Planning the fair began back in October when Anixter Literacy was preparing their annual event to showcase learners. This year, the formula felt stale and my supervisor Lesley encouraged me to contribute new ideas. I suggested doing different booths where people could walk around and interact one-on-one with our clients. Lesley loved the idea! Anixter's CEO did too! I was so excited, but with little event planning experience, I was nervous about how we were going to translate the picture in my head into reality.

Over the months, I learned so much about facilitating a special event. Lesley oversaw everything, and from him, I learned how to break things down into staggered deadlines so I wouldn't be overwhelmed. Being a part of the developing team, I was always included in meetings with other Anixter departments and it was awesome to see how they worked in tandem to make the event happen.



(Continued on page 5)

Discover Literacy Fair *(Continued from page 4)*



On the big day, the fair was a success! We had booths ranging from information on accessible technology, lesson planning and creative writing to poetry, business plans and blogs. Attendees got to see showcases of our clients' work such as blogs and poetry, and they asked questions of volunteers and booth participants alike.

Wrapping up the night, the fair transitioned into a tutor appreciation presentation that highlighted the many years and great ways our dedicated volunteers had given their time and energy to the program. Anixter Center's CEO Teresa Garate closed out the event with a speech expounding the importance of literacy. We hope to hold the event next year!

Cat Pumphrey, Anixter Center

Member Spotlights: Heartland Alliance

Even before joining AmeriCorps as a Literacy Specialist at Heartland Services, **Tomás Castrejon** was already volunteering at his site for two years. He was inspired to join as a AmeriCorps member after having taught a class there for a whole trimester.

A Chicago native, Tomás attended Northeastern Illinois University where he completed his undergrad degree in Economics and his TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) degree during grad school. As a level four ESL instructor, Tomás says that he is inspired by his students' lives and their struggles. A memorable moment was when a really shy student was finally encouraged to speak for the first time during a women's rights discussion. One of the things he enjoys most at Heartland is learning his students' languages, such as Ukrainian. His strongest challenge is managing those who are struggling in class, and challenging the ones who are more advanced.

After AmeriCorps, Tomás plans to complete his master's degree in Economics and continue teaching ESL while working in the corporate world. Outside of work, Tomás enjoys spending time with his dog Bailey and learning new languages like Ukrainian and Polish—which makes his site a great place to learn!



HEARTLAND ALLIANCE

The Heartland Alliance, of which Heartland Human Care Services (HHCS) is a part, advances the human rights and responds to the human needs of endangered populations—particularly the poor, the isolated, and the displaced—through the provision of comprehensive services and the promotion of permanent solutions leading to a more just global society. The HHCS Adult Volunteer Literacy (AVL) Project provides English as a Second Language instruction, emphasizing language fluency and competencies that are relevant to the daily lives of the adults served. Classes are held at a RICS site in the Belmont-Cragin neighborhood with volunteers providing classroom, small group, and one-on-one instruction for adult learners.

Member Spotlights: The Pui Tak Center



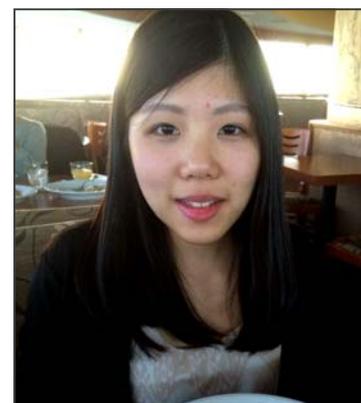
Born and raised in Chicago, **Robin O'Connor** attended the Moody Bible Institute where she majored in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). Even before joining AmeriCorps, Robin was already interning at the Pui Tak Center where she was informed about the “Summer of Service “ AmeriCorps position.

At Pui Tak, Robin is an ESL teacher and a tutor. In addition to teaching and lesson planning, she acts as an all-around general assistant to the center. The greatest reward that Robin finds at Pui Tak is being able to see the students each day, and getting to know them more. Everyday the students would all say hello, even though their use of English is so limited. When the most reserved students would greet her and initiate conversation, Robin says she was touched and inspired by their bravery in pursuing conversation. Working with the students is easy, but working and communicating with the other teachers is her greatest challenge.

After her service, Robin plans on finishing her degree at Moody Bible Institute. She sees herself in the future teaching English in China, or an ESL organization in Chicago. When she is not working, Robin enjoys playing softball, weight lifting, reading and watching movies with her husband.

Qili Zhou came from China. She attended University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she majored in Advertising. Before joining AmeriCorps, Qili had interned at a small media company. Now she’s an ESL teacher and tutor at the Pui Tak Center. She says she’s giving back to her community because her mother and brother-in-law learned English there.

At Pui Tak, Qili finds her biggest reward is when she sees her students’ persistence actually pay off and improve their English skills. One of her shy students is now more talkative and he interacts more with the other students! Her biggest challenge is thinking up creative ways to get her teenaged students motivated in class.



After the program ends, Qili hopes to find a job in the advertising field, where she can create awesome ads for her clients. Alternatively, she might go back to school to get her Masters. When she’s not at work, Qili enjoys traveling, eating and trying out different restaurants, but she also enjoys staying at home to couch potato and watch dramas.



Pui Tak Center
serve. love. witness.

Established in 1994 by the Chinese Christian Union Church to be a Christian witness to Chinese in Chicago, the Pui Tak Center serves over 2,500 individuals each year through a variety of educational, family and community services that include a computer learning center, a music program, and a preschool through 6th grade school. The Adult ESL program offers six levels of English and citizenship preparation classes. Nearly 1,200 adults attend the classes each year.



Sal Salam was born in the United Arab Emirates and lived in Bangladesh before moving to the United States. Sal attended Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas where they majored in English. Prior to AmeriCorps, Sal worked as a volunteer ESL tutor and a freelance writer and editor.

At the Indo-American Center, Sal is the Program Assistant where they teach ESL classes, facilitate and translate conversations for clients, and provide administrative support. According to Sal, one of the perks of working at IAC is being surrounded by intelligent, thoughtful and fun-loving coworkers, and being able to help people lacking in access to basic resources due to language and culture-related barriers. One of Sal’s memorable moments was when they facilitated a complicated conversation between a housing counselor and an evicted refugee and helped them understand what needed to be

done. According to Sal, the greatest challenge they came across is keeping the program’s limited budget in mind when they’re helping the center’s clients.

After AmeriCorps, Sal hopes to keep finding ways to contribute to and help the communities that they’re apart of, particularly the communities of people of color, queer and trans-folk. Sal’s greatest plans for the future is to be living healthy, surrounded by fun, inspiring people and doing meaningful work. When not working, Sal enjoys reading, watching films and eating vast quantities of chocolate.



The Indo-American Center was established in 1990 to respond to the wide range of needs within Chicago’s south Asian immigrant population. IAC strives to help clients become empowered and connected through a range of educational programs, resources and social services in nine areas: Citizenship and Immigration, Adult Literacy, Civics Education, Senior Citizens, Youth, Computer Education, Public Benefits Assistance, Workforce Development and a Legal Clinic.

Hailing from Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood, **Rufino Salgado** attended the University of Illinois at Chicago and graduated with a Bachelor’s in Psychology. Before becoming an AmeriCorps member, Rufino worked in the research department of the Johnson O’Conner Research Foundation as a data clerk. Joining AmeriCorps was an opportunity to gain more experience in his growing interest in literacy and education.



At Instituto, Rufino is a teaching assistant for ESL classes, a tutor and sometimes a substitute for citizenship classes. Rufino finds that his biggest reward is being able to be a part of the community and celebrate the accomplishments with staff and students at the institute. He witnessed a profound moment when the staff and students in every class started a donation drive for a tutor whose father suddenly passed away. He finds that his biggest challenge is regulating his lifestyle changes because evening hours at Instituto often run late.

After his time with Instituto, Rufino wants to look further into his career in literacy and education. He is also thinking of pursuing an education or English degree. When not working, Rufino enjoys writing a lot.



IDPL is an educational organization whose mission is to contribute to the fullest development of Latino immigrants and their families through education, training and employment. With offices in three different communities on the southwest side of Chicago, IDPL offers a continuum of adult education services from learning how to read in Spanish up to the GED. ABE and pre-GED classes are also offered, as is English literacy for students with less than a 6th grade education in their first language.

**VOCAL AmeriCorps
2014-2015**

Albany Park Community Center
Chelsea Dennis

Anixter Center
Catherine Pumphrey

Centro Romero
Katie Maranzana
Martha Ochoa-Nebolsky
Yassir Salim

Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition
Yoselyn Ovalle

Heartland Services
Lena Camacho
Tomás Castrejon

Howard Area Community Center
Jason Kaiser

Indo-American Center
Sal Salam

Instituto del Progreso Latino
David Anians
Marcelo Isais
Rufino Salgado

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
Wendy Huang

IYC – Harrisburg
Brandon Thom
Mary Baccus
Larry Durfee
Patricia Wright

IYC-Kewanee
Anita Banks
Etta LaFlora
Victoria West

IYC-St. Charles
Peter Liebenow
Teresa Urfer

Literacy Volunteers of Western Cook County
Julius Bell

Mercy Housing
Sybil Morrison

Pui Tak Center
Sophie Bouwsma
Robin O'Connor
Kathryn Van Horn
Qili Zhou

Sunshine Community Services Center
Jennista Eastman
Brendan Jamison
Dominique Ramsey
Rachel Wentworth
Gregory Wyman

World Relief Chicago
Yakini Branch
Kathryn Waldron

**Thank You
for supporting
another year with
Literacy Volunteers
of Illinois!**

LVI's SOCIAL NETWORKS

FOLLOW US ON 

www.Twitter.com/LVillinois



All our photos can be found on
Facebook, so remember to "Like" us
when you visit www.Facebook.com.