



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



Food ... Fun... and a Fond Farewell ... to the Class of 2014 !

VOCAL members, LVI staff and board members, site supervisors and guests gathered at Roditys Restaurant in Greektown on Friday, August 22nd to celebrate the end of the AmeriCorps program year. After a year of First Friday Training, many lunches at Under 55, a few service projects, and the sharing of experiences at member meetings about serving on the front lines of literacy, the time was right for a celebration !

Board member John McLeod, along with executive director Dorothy Miaso and program coordinator Chamala Travis greeted guests as they trickled in. A sumptuous meal of Greek specialties that included Saganaki (flaming cheese), Gyros, Moussaka, and Pastichio (and vegetarian and vegan for those preferring that) soon followed. As dinner was cleared away and a dessert of Baklava and Galaktoburiko (philo-filled custard) along with coffee and tea was being served, the program began.

After opening remarks by Dorothy, LVI board members – Alex Crevi, John McLeod and Madison Palmer – were introduced with all extending thanks and congratulations to members on their successful year of service. Attending site supervisors also extended their thanks and praised the dedication and work of their members. A pictorial retrospective of the year followed with members laughing and cheering as the pictures brought back memories of the past year and served as a reminder of how far everyone has come in just a year's time.

The presentation of members by Chamala came next with board president Alex Crevi and board treasurer John McLeod presenting certificates and gifts to the members.

The evening ended with members providing insight into their *Life after AmeriCorps* which included for one member a flight the next day to Jordan for a two-year study program there. Several members reported being hired by their host site, several will be returning to school, several others will be renewing, while several others are still pondering their next steps.

While the celebration marked the end of a year of service it served also as a new beginning as members resolved, as alums, to carry their AmeriCorps commitment *this year and beyond* and continue to *get things done for America*.



Clockwise from upper left – Dave, Del, Allison, Erlinda and Sara enjoying each other and the Roditys wine; Oopah ! Flaming cheese is being served; John Downey, IYC-Kewanee (left) chats with LVI board members John McLeod (center) and Madison Palmer (right); Dorothy welcomes everyone; Our program and member gifts; Alex Crevi chats with Deb Sundberg & Marlene McLeod; Marcelo & guest, Mimi, Etta & Martha await the feast; World Relief members Kathryn & Chloe pose for a photo.



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Executive Director

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VOCAL AmeriCorps*

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*Program Coordinator
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Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

Josh Barrile
Tim Downen
Leonard Stadler
George Wright
Pat Wright
IYC-Harrisburg

Ron Happach
Etta LaFlora
IYC-Kewanee

Steffanie Stuckey
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From the Executive Director ...

The end is here !

We've hit the year-end mark for most of our Members and I thank you all – members and host sites alike - for being a part of our 2014 VOCAL- Volunteer Outreach for Community Action in Literacy - program.



This our last issue of VOCAL News for this program year and in it we feature the members at Instituto del Progreso Latino and the Pui Tak Center. We also are listing within this issue a full listing on the Class of 2014. We were sorry that the full “class” 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 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 online 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.

p.s. Remember to –

- 1.) Follow us on Twitter - <http://twitter.com/LVillinois>;
- 2.) Be our friend on Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/lvillinois>; and,
- 3.) Join AmeriCorps Alums - www.americorpsalums.org and/or <https://www.facebook.com/amicorpsalumschicago>

Member Spotlight at Instituto del Progreso Latino



Dave Anians was born in Burbank, Illinois. He attended Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL and majored in Community Leadership and Civic

Engagement, which primarily focused on learning about non-profit organizations.

Before joining AmeriCorps, Dave had recently graduated from NIU and was searching for work in the non-profit sector, while working part-time jobs. Dave decided to join AmeriCorps after he saw how beneficial the experience would be both in the workplace and in communities.

Dave is an ESL Instructor at the Instituto del Progreso Latino (IDPL) in the Adult Education Department. His biggest rewards are meeting and helping wonderful people who work hard every day to teach and learn. The biggest challenges, he says, are learning Spanish and making sure that he helps in the most effective way possible.

After his time serving for AmeriCorps, Dave plans to continue his strive to help communities, in a career that serves and empowers people.

“I plan on continuing to work in the non-profit sector and learning more about the world we live in and how we can work to undo oppression and injustice,” he says.

Outside of AmeriCorps, Dave enjoys to write, play music, visit friends and learn about current and historical political and social issues.

Instituto del Progreso Latino 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 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. Also offered are computer literacy programs and internet access.



Marcelo Isaías was born in Chicago but moved to Mexico with his family when he was just 2 years old. He was raised in a small city in central Mexico called San Luis Potosi, where Spanish was his first language. Marcelo earned an Associate of Arts degree from Harold Washington College and is currently pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Urban Education from the University of Illinois in Chicago.

Before joining AmeriCorps, Marcelo served as a coordinator for a ‘Students-at-Risk’ Summer Program via Chicago Public Schools. He was also a tutor in an after-school program for low-income families from the Southside and a Teaching Assistant at a bilingual alternative school. He joined AmeriCorps after he was already volunteering at his host site and familiar with both sides of the classroom.

“I have been on the other end of this learning experience as a student and I know first-hand what difference literacy makes in someone’s life. That is why I feel proud to help my community and my hope is one day [my students] will help their communities as well,” he says.

Marcelo is a Pathway to Citizenship Teacher at the Instituto del Progreso Latino, where he prepares students to take their citizenship test. He also assists with ESL tutoring and elementary education literacy in Spanish. For Marcelo, the most rewarding aspect of his position is helping people achieve their dream of becoming voting-members of the United States. A major challenge, he says, is that his classes are open enrollment, which means he must bring new students up to speed in the class throughout the school year.

After AmeriCorps, Marcelo plans to finish his degree and is thinking about renewing his part-time service. In the future, he sees himself as a teacher, working to improve his community and city.

Outside of AmeriCorps, Marcelo loves motorcycles, practicing martial arts and going to concerts. He also enjoys learning about different people and cultures from all over the world.

Member Spotlight at the Pui Tak Center



Allison Lewis is from Prairie Village, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City. She graduated from Wheaton College, where she majored in both English and Secondary Education.

Before joining AmeriCorps, Allison taught an adult ESL class at the Pui Tak Center (now her host site) and Elgin Community College. She joined AmeriCorps to get more involved at the Pui Tak center and obtain a ‘behind-the-scenes’ look at what it takes to coordinate an entire program.

At the Pui Tak Center, Allison is the Assistant Adult ESL Tutoring Coordinator and provides support to volunteer tutors by finding them materials and brainstorming teaching ideas. She also coordinates the tutoring program, conducts tutoring sessions and teaches group classes. She finds it rewarding to see her students gain skills and become more confident in their English speaking and challenging to give constructive criticism to her tutors.

“I have had to learn how to address problems in a way that is respectful and encouraging to the tutor, while also effectively solving the problem,” she states.

After her AmeriCorps service, Allison plans to work part-time at the Pui Tak Center, teaching one adult ESL class. She will also begin studies this month at UIC, where she will pursue a graduate degree in Linguistics, with a concentration in TESOL.

Outside of her AmeriCorps work, you can find Allison cooking, reading, spending time with friends and enjoying the yoga class she recently started.

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 as well as citizenship preparation classes and one-to-one tutoring. Nearly 1,200 adults are served each year in their Adult Education programs.

Sarah Swetz Huang is from Snohomish, WA – about one hour north of Seattle. She attended Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA and graduated in the spring of 2011 with a double major in Chinese Studies and Communication.



Before joining AmeriCorps, Sarah traveled to China to study Mandarin and complete an International Relations internship in Beijing. Upon arriving back in the US, she married and moved with her husband to Chicago, where he is pursuing his Master’s degree. Sarah joined AmeriCorps when the opportunity arose after she got involved with tutoring at the PuiTak Center. She went from being a 1-on-1 tutor to teaching her own classes twice a day – some with well over 40 students.

Sarah serves as the Assistant Adult ESL Tutoring Coordinator at her site. Her role includes helping to train, manage and coordinate student-tutor pairs. She also helped develop the Hotel English curriculum. Sarah finds it extremely rewarding to see students make level gains and achieve goals like finding employment. She finds training new tutors challenging, as there is a lot of paperwork and assignments they are required to complete.

This fall Sarah will begin pursuing her Master’s Degree in Education at DePaul University. In two years, she hopes to earn her K-12 Certification to teach Chinese. In the future, Sarah plans to continue her newfound passion.

“Through my time serving in AmeriCorps, I have really found a passion for teaching. Whether I am speaking English or Chinese in America or China, I know that I want to be teaching. I feel that helping people learn and grow is the best investment I can make,” she states.

When not serving, Sarah enjoys working in the International Student Ministry at her church, where she provides a support network and resources for foreign exchange students. She also likes running along Lake Michigan and brushing up on her Mandarin by watching Chinese movies.

**VOCAL AmeriCorps
2013 - 2014**

Albany Park Community Center

Delvin Mason
Tanika Richardson
Thania Rios

Anixter Center

Megan George

Centro Romero

Abigail Kornhauser
Zoe Lang
Martha Ochoa-Nebolsky

Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition

Shanicka Burdine

Howard Area Community Center

Theresa Hale
Jennifer Mensah

Indo-American Center

Phoenix Forbes

Instituto del Progreso Latino

David Anians
Marcelo Isais

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

Trudye Connolly
Elizabeth Wackerlin

IYC – Harrisburg

Joshua Barrile
Tim Downen
Evelyn Martinez
Leonard Stadler
George Wright
Patricia Wright

IYC-Kewanee

Ron Happach
Etta LaFlora

IYC-St. Charles

Steffanie Stuckey

IYC-Warrenville

Anna Simmons

Midwest Asian American Center

Erlinda Escobar

Pui Tak Center

Allison Lewis
Alyssa Loeffelman
Sarah Swetz-Huang

Township High School District #214

Jarmanese (Mimi) Torrance

World Relief Chicago

Chloe Dautch
Kathryn Norregaard



Alyssa Loeffelman was born in a small town south of St. Louis. She graduated this past May from Moody Bible Institute in downtown Chicago, with a B.A. in TESOL.

Before joining AmeriCorps, as a Summer Associate Alyssa was a full-time student and taught a weekly English class for two years in Humboldt Park. She also spent last summer in Albania for an internship where she taught English at a neighborhood church program. Alyssa joined AmeriCorps after her TESOL professor recommended it and she decided it was the ideal way to gain more ESL experience over the summer.

Alyssa's host site is the PuiTak Center, where she primarily teaches and plans a six-week ESL program. She also teaches a restaurant English course and helps full-time AmeriCorps members with revisions to the restaurant curriculum. Alyssa finds the most challenging aspect of her teaching is encouraging students to consistently talk in and practice their English.

“Learning how to plan and teach lessons that require [students] to speak and practice their English has been challenging, but the process has helped me learn and grow as a teacher,” says Alyssa. However, watching her students open up and become more comfortable in the classroom is always rewarding.

In August, Alyssa will begin attending the Moody Theological Seminary, where she will pursue a Master's Degree in Biblical Studies and Theology and plans to continue teaching ESL. In the future, Alyssa wants to combine her love of teaching ESL, the Bible, theology and the church to continue to build relationships with her students. She also wants to develop materials to help Christian teachers simplify the beliefs of their faith to make them easily understood by students.

