



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



3rd Annual MLK Day at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter

On Martin Luther King Day, seven AmeriCorps members honored their commitment to “A day on, Not a day off” by cooking and serving breakfast at Lincoln Park Community Shelter - LPCS. The Lincoln Park Community Shelter is an agency which provides comprehensive services for adults experiencing homelessness. At the shelter, members whipped up a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs, pancakes, toast, and sausage links for 35 residents. After serving the residents, members were able to sit down, eat breakfast, and talk with them. The LPCS residents were endlessly appreciative, and by serving a new group of people, AmeriCorps members’ commitment to service was refreshed and strengthened. Erica Brooks says, “Just like everyone had a job today in the kitchen, I think everyone, no matter what their skill set may be has something to offer to society.” - Melanie Wagner



★★★★★
 “I think it’s a choice for everyone, saying you have no time or no valuable skill to give is just an excuse.”

– AdriAnne Bowe Slagle,
 Project Leader for LPCS

★★★★★



Jesse Owens' parents and VOCAL members hard at work.



MLK Activity Coordinator Mrs. McGinnis and VOCAL Project Leader, Dominique Davis



Hey! It's VOCAL Coordinator Chamala Travis with Ben Tompkins and Sam Reese sorting books.

Jesse Owens Elementary School gets an “Extreme Library Makeover”

To honor Martin Luther King, a group of energetic AmeriCorps members joined community members at the Jesse Owens Elementary School on January 21st for a day of service. In spite of extreme cold, extreme heat and time restrictions, the team of roughly 20 dedicated volunteers accomplished an extraordinary amount. Kirstin McGinnis, joint coordinator of this project alongside VOCAL Member Dominique Davis, had developed two main goals for the day: reorganize the school library and paint the walls of the school. Though the tasks were large and daunting, the volunteers proved more than capable of meeting the challenge.

Within moments of arriving, the tasks were underway and the volunteers were hard at work. Upstairs in the library, nine volunteers from the Maple Park Missionary Baptist Church worked side by side with an elite squad of nine AmeriCorps forces to de-shelf, organize and resshelf 20 bookcases. Downstairs, students from the Homewood Flossmor National Honor and Art Society painted words on the walls under the direction of Mr. Boyd, a professional artist. Jesse Owens staff, including Principal Taylor, Mr. McDonald, Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. McGinnis, also entered the fray, bouncing from site to site while injecting energy and food into the volunteers. Even two parents, Mr. and Mrs. Winslow, labored to help their children and their community. For hours, these groups worked together and shared ideas. *Continued on Page 2*

A Message from the Executive Director...



LVI STAFF

Dorothy Miaso
Executive Director

Chamala Travis
Program Coordinator
VOCAL AmeriCorps

Brook Milburn
Program Coordinator
IYC-Harrisburg

Debra Sundberg
Program Coordinator
IYC-Kewanee

Jeanette Kiene
Program Coordinator
IYC- St. Charles

AMERICORPS MEMBERS

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Trudye Connolly
Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

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Evelyn Martinez
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IYC-St. Charles

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Maria Thiel
Diana Turowski

NEWSLETTER

Chamala Travis
Editor

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

30 East Adams, Suite 1130
Chicago, IL 60603
P: 312.857.1582
F: 312.587.1586
lvillinois.org
info@lvillinois.org

info@lvillinois.org

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?’”

While this quote may not be one of the more widely known or oft-repeated of Dr. King, it epitomizes the spirit with which Congress created the MLK National Day of Service back in 1994 and the spirit with which our members approached the day as you will see in the articles they've written about their activities. With a 100% member participation rate and five different projects, this was one of our finest days on. Thank you to everyone who was a part of our day or, in the case of our IYC-Harrisburg corps, days. Thank you, also to Dominique Davis, Adrienne Bowe Slagle and Lauren Thompson, who spearheaded the service projects and to those offering their perspectives on the day in this issue of VOCAL News.

So, with our first big project of 2013 behind us, we turn our attention to the next two projects before us – National AmeriCorps Week and the Annual On the Road to Literacy Conference and Awards Presentation.

Created by the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2007, the goal of *National AmeriCorps Week* is two-fold: 1.) Connect AmeriCorps members and alums with each other so they feel they are a part of a nationwide effort; and, 2.) Communicate AmeriCorps' powerful impact on critical problems and on the lives of its members and alums. The 2013 theme of the Week - March 9th-17th - is *America Works*. LVI will celebrate the week by sponsoring our 6th annual Volunteer Information and Recruitment Fair on Monday, March 11th at the Thompson Center in downtown Chicago. This will be an opportunity for members and host sites to distribute information on services offered and recruit additional volunteers for your tutor ranks. Other AmeriCorps programs will also be participating in the day's activities, and we'll be invited to participate in some of their activities as well. Stay tuned more information will be coming your way.

On the heels of National AmeriCorps Week is our 22nd *Annual On the Road to Literacy Conference* slated for Saturday, March 23rd. The conference will feature 24 workshops on a wide variety of topics along with a closing awards presentation that recognizes the fine work of our volunteer tutors. We hope each of you will nominate at least one of your tutors for this special recognition, as they may well be selected as the 2013 Tutor of the Year ! Everyone should have already received nomination forms in the mail; additional ones are available on our web site. A shout out and thank you to members Lauren Thompson and Anna Ochs and former member Beth Hausler for serving on this year's conference's Planning Committee.

Enjoy your February !

“Extreme Library” Makeover, *Continued*

By the end of the day, the library had been completely reorganized and the walls were covered with bright colors and helpful words. As the AmeriCorps team sat reflecting, each member exuded satisfaction and pride. Trudye Connolly summarized the day well when she observed that this project epitomized Dr. King's message that “The time is always right to do something right”. Several diverse groups of friends, family and strangers had gathered together to provide children with a more colorful, better organized place to learn. The day had clearly been a success. - Sam Reese

Member Spotlight: Howard Area Community Center



Liz is from Tinley Park. She graduated last May from Trinity Christian College where she studied social work and Spanish. She joined AmeriCorps to get experience in working in social services. Liz plans to go to graduate school and wanted to work at a job where there was a defined beginning and end, unlike working in the private sector where it can be difficult to just up and leave for school.

Liz is a Literacy Tutor Advisor in the Howard Area Community Center (HACC). The rewards and challenges of her work swing between the students and tutors. It's a challenge to make meaningful connections between them, she says. When students don't show up for class, it is her responsibility to manage the disappointments of the volunteers. When students do come to class, she is happy for them but overall she says that on a continuing basis she knows that her responsibility is to explain to tutors and students the ups and downs are the nature of the work. Liz says that the Community Center averages 75 percent attendance, taking into consideration weeks when everyone is there and weeks when no one is here. Liz says she loves her work.

After her service with AmeriCorps, Liz looks forward eventually to graduate school but may renew for a second year in the meantime. She is exploring attending UIC, Loyola or DePaul but says she's committed to staying in Chicago. When she does finish graduate school, she plans to work in social services and is particularly interested in areas that deal with women in crisis, the homeless and also hopes to be involved in shaping political policy.



Ben is from Michigan and grew up in the Travers City area. He attended Central Michigan University and graduated with a degree in communication in 2012. He says he had AmeriCorps in his sight since college, but during an interim period he took some temporary jobs including working for an architecture firm and even being a doorman. In the fall of 2011, he joined AmeriCorps and began work at Project Yes! the Youth Education Service, in West Town at Northwestern University Settlement House. Both of Ben's parents are in education and he always wanted to see if his talents and interest might allow him to follow in their footsteps.

Ben is a Tutor Advisor in the Howard Area Community center where his job is to work hands on with students in the Adult Basic Education program and to prepare students to take the GED exam. Ben finds the whole role of education in society rewarding. He believes the challenge is to understand everybody's learning process is different and to try to be as accommodating as possible to each person. His work is mostly spent one on one with students but he is involved with a couple of small groups as well.

After AmeriCorps, Ben wants to remain in the education field but is particularly interested in working with students with disabilities. He is keen to find ways that education can be tailored to help people with special needs. Ben's particular interest in students with disabilities is personal and harkens back to his own experience of having a brain tumor when he was six. Ben says it taught him that people with disabilities require a variety of accommodations to fit their needs which are special and unique to each individual.



The mission of the Howard Area Community Center is to assist low-income individuals and families in and near Rogers Park to stabilize their lives and develop the skills necessary to become productive community members. To that end, a network of progressive programs are offered that respond to short and long-term issues of poverty in the community, including hunger, the shortage of affordable child care, low educational achievement, and limited work experience and skills. Adult education programs offered include – ABE, ESL, and GED Instruction, an Employment Resource Center, Computer Instruction and Family Literacy.

Member Spotlight: District 214



Jarmanese or “Mimi” as she is known to many of her colleagues is from Arlington Heights, IL. She attended Augustana College where she majored in English. Her first job was as a newspaper reporter and columnist for the Waukegan News Sun. She then took a job at a transitional living facility for homeless girls; helping them to find jobs and get back on their feet. After she obtained a certification in nonprofit and volunteer management from Harper College, she decided to get a Master’s Degree in English as a second language from the University of Phoenix and that paved the way for her to become an ESL instructor. Because she was a Jaycee member, she was able to win two grants from the Walmart Foundation to help local people in the Wheeling community. In September 2012 she joined AmeriCorps with the goal of strengthening her experience working with nonprofit organizations.

Mimi works in District 214 in Arlington Heights. She is an intern in the Read to Learn Program at five different sights. The greatest reward of her work, she says, is to seeing people gain confidence as they learn to read. What’s difficult, she says, is to see that education has failed some people and they have slipped through the cracks. Mimi says the biggest challenge of her work is to hold it together and not indulge in emotion. It makes you mad, she says, but you have to realize that you can’t change the past; you can only look to the future. After AmeriCorps service, Mimi would like to teach adult ESL or work in organization dedicated to literacy. She hasn’t ruled out going abroad to teach and, with that in mind, she keeps up her fluency in Spanish.



District 214’s Community Education program, which houses the Read to Learn program, provides services to adults using public school facilities as base of operation. A wide array of services are offered to adult learners that include literacy screening assessment, goal-setting, interest inventories, individualized lesson plans, weekly one-on-one tutoring sessions, and weekly conversation classes among others.

Another Terrific Tales Story Time!!



On Saturday, January 19th, Center for Companies That Care had the first Terrific Tales Story Time session of 2013. With the New Year, so many wonderful changes have happened: a new location, West Englewood Library, and a dramatic increase in participants. We had the highest attendance yet of 15 children and five adults!

The theme for the session was Make Your Mark! Everyone was captivated by the enthusiastic readings done by the famous Storybook Mom, Nili Yelin that three brave children joined her in reading *The Skin You Live In*. Nili and all the families read the “Terrific Tales Story Time Oath,” which is new to the program and will be read during upcoming sessions. All children in attendance took home a free book. As an added incentive, we will give away a free prize to all children who attend four story time sessions and anyone who brings a friend will get two books to take home with them.

We invite you and your family to join us at the next Terrific Tales Story Time session on Saturday, February 23rd at West Englewood Library at 1745 W. 63rd Street, Chicago from 10 a.m.-11 a.m.!

-Tanika Richardson



Member Perspectives

A Kind Remark, A Warm Meal, and Genuine Hearts

For the MLK Day of Service I and four other AmeriCorps members served at the Franciscan Outreach Association Bucktown area where we served meals to 100 guests, who for various reasons found were in need of a warm meal on a painfully cold night. The evening started with guest receiving a numbered meal ticket. They would then shed a layer and perhaps leave a few of their treasures along the side of the room before coming to sit at one of the dining tables with 8-10 others who were also hungry for a meal.

A line of servers filled up trays with steaming hot food and handed them to me or one of the two other AmeriCorps members who then brought meals over to the table where the guests' remarks were then exchanged for their meal. Some scarfed down their food while others lingered to socialize and enjoy the warmth of the room. Once finished, they carried their trays over to where two AmeriCorps members stood in bright spirits receiving their trays to wash them. After serving meals to all 100 guests and cleaning all the tables and dishes, the five of us bid our goodbyes to the staff and went to eat and discuss the service that we did. We made observations about various people that we served. It seemed to us that hard times could fall on almost anyone, which allowed us to empathize with the people who came that day for a meal. We also recognized that we were blessed and found ourselves eager to care for others in a tangible way like serving a hot meal to them because of this realization.

- Abbey Reynolds



Books, Books, & More Books!

On the MLK Day of Service, 7 members gathered at a storage space in Bridgeport to go through books donated to LVI. We were joined by Dorothy Miaso and board member John McLeod. When we got there, we found out that there were thousands of books in the space, all donated by one family! There was a very wide assortment of books, from yoga and new age topics to cookbooks and collectors' items. We had a great time laughing at the funny titles. We spent 4 hours sorting books in the space, and even got to keep books we found interesting! I found some great cookbooks, and a book of folk songs from U.S. history. I know that by giving 4 hours of our time, we helped the people LVI serves by finding books for the On the Road to Literacy Conference, as well as items to sell to collectors.

-Anna Ochs



Liz Brice and Martha Reilly on MLK Day in the kitchen at Franciscan Outreach.



Sorting thousands of books with a purpose.



Vocal Members pose alongside Board Treasurer John McLeod on MLK Day.

"Manpower" Counts in Literacy

For MLK day, I and a few others from my Corps volunteered to help sort through donated books. While our contribution didn't involve direct interaction with the communities we are serving, as in the case of the other Corps activities, I found our contributions to be very meaningful. Our actions were of great help to the institutions we serve, sifting through so many boxes of books, creating a system for sorting them, and then repacking them as needed required an unexpectedly large amount of manpower, and organization. Although we didn't get to experience the expressions and emotions of our community members as we handed them the books, the keys to their literacy, I came to appreciate the effort, and the unseen movement of a community behind the simple act of handing someone a copy of Charlotte's Web.

-Pablo Enriquez Dunkel

Alumni News

2003-2005

Nicole Beavers is a physician and owner of Optimal Wellness Chiropractic, Ltd located on the South Side of Chicago where she provides holistic and natural healthcare solutions for individuals and families.

2007-2008

Julie Kalsow substitutes for UNO Charter Schools and tutors privately while working as an ESL Instructor at Instituto del Progreso Latino. She is currently attending Northeastern Illinois University finishing her Master's in Teaching English as a Second Language.

2008-2010

David & Lauren Sweeney

2008-2009

Maya Marshall is an instructor for the Manufacturing Bridge and ABE level classes at Howard Area Community Center. Additionally, she serves as our AmeriCorps facilitator on civic reflection discussions for the Center on Civic Reflection.

2009-2010

Carey Clifford is actively volunteering on behalf of women and social justice issues and currently lives in Canada with her husband and infant son Siraj Ali.

Upcoming Dates

Friday, February 8th

9:00 a.m. - Noon

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Creating A Buzz: Newsletters, Flyers and Public Information Materials

LVI Office

Friday, February 22nd

9:00 a.m. - Noon

COLORS Personality Assessment

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Topics and Techniques for ESL Tutors

LVI Office

Friday, March 1st

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Quarterly Member Meeting

Updates and Facilitated Discussions

LVI Office



Monday, March 11th

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

6th Annual Volunteer Information & Recruitment Fair

James R. Thompson Center
Chicago, IL

Stay Connected !



Keep up-to-date on LVI going on and more on LVI's social media pages. The LVI **Twitter** url is <http://twitter.com/LVillinois>.



To fan us on **Facebook**, visit <http://www.facebook.com/lvillinois> and click the "like" button. Links to both social media are also on the LVI homepage.

Saturday, March 23rd
22nd Annual Conference



UIC Center for Literacy
1040 W. Harrison Street
Chicago, Illinois