



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



MLK Day of Service: A Day On Not Off

In 1994 Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act, which designated the national MLK Holiday as a Day of Service. The Corporation for National and Community Service was charged with leading the national effort, and LVI staff and VOCAL AmeriCorps members did their part by participating in a variety of service projects honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.—four were organized and led by VOCAL members: a Health Fair in the Pilsen community, serving as docents at the DuSable Museum; cooking and cleaning at the Fisher House; and, engaging children in a host of arts and crafts at the Kewanee Public Library. Members also assisted with activities organized by others. Members engaging in the projects continued a legacy of service not only since the start of the MLK *Day On Not Off* but MLK's own legacy of "beloved community."



The day began early for the eight members serving at the DuSable Museum of African American History, located on the south side of Chicago in Washington Park. The Museum's special programming for the day centered around the celebration of the life and legacy of Martin Luther King and ranged from speakers to choir performances. Members were there at the very start of the day to help set up and have everything in place and ready to go as the doors to the Museum were opened at 10:00 a.m. Apart from the special MLK programming, the DuSable Museum had all of their current exhibitions open to the public and expected a large turnout, so they particularly appreciated the extra set of hands to ensure the safety and security of their attendees and artwork. VOCAL members were joined by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority with both groups welcoming guests to the museum

and directing and redirecting volunteers and museum-goers to the appropriate areas. Following their service shifts, members had an opportunity to tour the museum on their own, which for some was a first time visit.

While many city members made their way to the DuSable Museum, another group, mostly suburban members made their way to the western suburbs for a return trip to the Fisher House in Hines, Illinois. The Fisher House, which is on the grounds of the Hines Veteran Administration Hospital, is one of a network of comfort homes where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. While the House receives support from the Fisher Foundation, which provides the bulk of funding to its network of homes, still the houses rely heavily on the human, financial and in-kind resources of volunteers. Our contribution on this day consisted of purchasing, preparing, cooking and serving breakfast for the families and veterans themselves who were lodging there. It was a bountiful display consisting of scrambled eggs, baked and fried bacon, skillet cooked sausage, Monkey Bread (it was ba ig hit), mixed fruit and, of course, orange juice and coffee

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From the Executive Director ...

Monday, January 20th marked the 34th anniversary of the celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday and, as you've seen in our front page story, it was a *Day On, Not Off* for LVI staff and VOCAL members. I thank all of the members for being a part of the activities, and especially appreciate those who organized the events – Etta LaFlora, Timothy White and Cecilia Garcia – and those who scouted out their own events to participate in when our three main ones up north were filled !

With Veterans Day and MLK Day behind us we have one more Service Day sneaking up soon – National AmeriCorps Week, which will be celebrated the week of March 10th – 16th. As promoted by CNCS, “AmeriCorps Week is a time to salute AmeriCorps members and alums for their service, thank AmeriCorps community partners, and communicate AmeriCorps impact on communities and on the lives of those who serve”.

While LVI's Fair at the Thompson Center and a return trip to the Rhine VFW Post will provide members with a forum to be involved in this special week, I also encourage members and site supervisors to promote the week at your sites and within your communities. This can include posting signs or flyers at your site and on your web site, blogging a story on your social media, or writing a letter of thanks to your congressman highlighting the work you do, the clients you serve, and the services your agency extends as a result of the AmeriCorps program. A template for a letter can be found in the Member Resources section of our website. Just fill in the blanks and send it on.

We are also nearing the date of our annual **On the Road to Literacy Conference and Awards Presentation**, which will be held on Saturday, March 23rd. The day-long event features over 20 workshops, two general sessions, numerous table topic discussions, a health literacy corner offering free blood pressure and glucose testing, a book give-away, and, tutor awards. Recognition is accorded to all tutors nominated – one will be named **Tutor of the Year**. I encourage members and host sites to submit your tutors for recognition at this great event. Nomination forms are on our website; the full program will soon be on the site. All members should plan on attending as your registration is complimentary.

Finally, two items dealing with the IRS. First, it has been brought to our attention that some members have received incorrect 1099's from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The 1099 is an IRS Form for Miscellaneous Income which, unfortunately, your Education Award is considered. If you used any portion of your Ed Award during 2018, you will receive a 1099 and it may have an extra zero in the amount. Etta LaFlora has checked this out for us with the CNCS, who advised that while the form you received in the mail is incorrect, it has been corrected—but you will need to go to your MyAmeriCorps account to download the corrected form.

Second, if you need assistance in filing your taxes, free help is available to you through TaxPrepChicago, which offers free, confidential tax help to individuals earning up to \$30,000 and families earning up to \$55,000. Check out the web sites listed on page 7 for further information on accessing the service.

MLK Day of Service: A Day On Not Off (cont.)

After clearing tables and cleaning the kitchen, members and staff helped clean the house. While the House has staff and regular volunteers who tend to some of these details, they were *off not on* for this day and so VOCAL members stepped up to the task of cleaning air ducts and stairwells, as well as vacuuming, dusting, polishing anything and everything located in House’s common living areas.

Following that, members turned their attention to creating welcoming toiletry bags that are provided to the incoming guests—150 or so who arrive each month. The effort yielded some 80 bags, which house staff said will take them through the rest of the month. Members and staff served with an earnest effort and left with a sense of pride and accomplishment.



LVI staff and members and Holly Wright, House Manager, pose at the bust of the Fisher’s who founded the network of houses.



Cecilia Garcia led the planning

Back in the city in the Pilsen community, Centro Sin Fronteras, an LVI host site, hosted a Community Health Fair that offered free blood pressure and blood sugar level checks, as well as other preventative health screenings. Centro Sin Fronteras dedicated this national day of service to health screenings because they thought they could make the most impact on their community by stressing the necessity of early detection and prevention for healthy lives. To prepare for the health fair, volunteers set up tables and work stations. Eight volunteers were trained by medical students on how to take blood pressure and blood sugar levels, for the 100+ community resident who were expected to attend. At the end of their day, Centro Sin Fronteras played the famous MLK speech for community members, some of whom had never heard it before. The event concluded at 5 pm with volunteers and community residents feeling a sense of satisfaction for a job well done.

And, in Kewanee, the second floor conference room at the Kewanee Public Library was buzzing with activity as youth and adults throughout the city joined together to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. The Library was again the host site for the celebration and assisted with the program. Nine local AmeriCorps members assigned to the YMCA, Salvation Army, Abilities Plus and the Sunshine Community Services Center were at numerous stations where the youth participated in activities such as reading, making crafts, building things, coloring pictures, answering questions and writing about how King would handle various situations. After



completing the activities, each child received a free book and a piece of birthday cake or cookies. Check out the Facebook page for the Sunshine Community Services Center for more pictures.



In the northern suburbs, two members participated in The Volunteer Center’s Day of Service at the Winnetka Community House. VOCAL members were part of the 200 volunteers who made blankets, crafts for children, and cards for veterans.

Finally, two members served with ICIRR—the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights—at a storage facility where they sorted and organized clothing and other donations to be given to their clients, most of who are newly arriving.

First Friday Member Training

Members started off the year after long holiday breaks with a much welcomed training. This full day training concentrated on various teaching methods and their application. Members were not only passive learners but were able to apply the different ideas that they were learning in small groups or pairs. This training was led by Becky Deforest from Literary Works.

The first major concept presented to members was the notion of Popular Education. Members were then introduced to two different pedagogies of education: the banking model of education and popular education. This introduction allowed members to think of their adult learners as co-creators of their education instead of the more traditional top-down mentality. Members were also exposed to the differences that their students' culture and educational background have on their receptiveness to this approach to teaching. This opened up the training for different exercises that allowed members to put into practice a more popular method of education. This first part of the training concentrated on vibrant, engaging teaching practices.

The training then moved on to classroom management skills in order to build on the training thus far. The notion of popular education was further expanded through classroom management. Members were given the tools to create their classroom expectations with their adult learners, really reinforcing the idea of co-educators. Members were also encouraged to introduce routines with their adult learners to create expectations in the classroom in this way.

Apart from learning different teaching techniques and classroom management styles and strategies, members were able to gain a perspective into potential adult learner learning processes. Members were given different exercises to work through that allowed them to quite literally put themselves in the place of their adult learners. The materials used in the exercises could then be used by AmeriCorps members in their own classrooms or with individual adult learners.

These practices created a classroom community among members in the training and hopefully the same community will be created across the different host organizations.



Upcoming Literacy Works Training— Serving the Whole Student - Meeting Needs That Go Beyond the Classroom

Students' barriers to success can be about more than what's happening in the classroom – they may have needs related to food, housing, medical issues, mental health, and a range of other challenges. Whether you are already familiar with the world of social services or brand new to it, this training will give you practical knowledge and tools about how best to support your ESL, ABE or ASE students. The training will cover: Behaviors that may be a clue your student is struggling to meet an everyday need; Dimensions of social service supports available (e.g. domestic violence, hunger, housing, etc.); Best practices for student privacy, boundaries, and the roles of staff and tutors; and, How to connect your student to resources.

Tuesday - February 26, 2019 from 6:00pm - 8:30pm @ The Literacenter

Presented by Liz Brice, LSW, MSW. Liz is the Director of Supportive Housing and Daytime Programs at Northside Housing and Supportive Services. Prior to working in case management, she worked with refugee and immigrant students in the adult education program at Howard Area Community Center. She understands the unique challenges that adult learners face, and is dedicated to building bridges between learners and services. Liz is also a former VOCAL AmeriCorps member.

Member Spotlight



Iraida Patino is a second term member. She was born and raised in Chicago and currently calls the Lincoln Square Neighborhood her home. She is the Family Literacy Coordinator at Centro Romero, located in Edgewater on the north side of Chicago.

Iraida recently graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago where she obtained her bachelor's degree in business. After graduation she was looking for ways to give back to her community and was told about the AmeriCorps program at Centro Romero. As a family literacy coordinator at Centro Romero most of Iraida's interactions revolve around the children who visit this host site, leading various activities such as through circle time, singing, and learning through playing. Iraida thoroughly enjoys spending time with children and in this way playing a role in family literacy. The children with whom she works are new and old faces with some of them staying for an entire year.

With that being said, one of the challenges which Iraida sometimes faces is the lack of consistency in the students that she sees, she says that students just stop showing up. Despite these challenges, Iraida finds her role at Centro Romero extremely rewarding. She loves seeing how participants benefit from the collective effort at Centro Romero. One of the highlights of this past year was around the holidays when Centro Romero was able to give Christmas gifts to children who otherwise might not have had any.

Iraida sees herself pursuing her masters after her second term with AmeriCorps. She is not entirely sure on what specific discipline she wants to focus but is considering a masters in Social Work. She wants to pursue something that combines her business background with some of the great work she is currently doing. Outside of her role at Centro Romero, Iraida enjoys baseball. However, she says that she is only an avid fan and not so much a player herself.



Centro Romero

Centro Romero is a non-profit organization providing options and opportunities for low-income Latino and other immigrants. Services offered include ESL and Spanish Literacy, Family Literacy, Immigration Services, and various programs for youth and women. Through education, Centro Romero emphasizes the development of the whole family unit, the creation of community leadership and self-reliance.



William Leslie is a first term member at Centro Romero. He is originally from Chicago and this past year finished his bachelor's degree at DePaul University in Chicago. After finishing his undergraduate studies he decided to join AmeriCorps, a program with which he was familiar but waited until after his graduation to pursue the program more seriously.

In his role as a Volunteer Coordinator at Centro Romero, William's main activity is the pairing of tutors and volunteers. He describes this process as putting puzzle pieces together to ensure the best fit. Apart from behind-the-scenes activity at Centro Romero, William ensures that he is a known resource for tutors and volunteers alike. William began his term strictly coordinating volunteers but he has added ESL and Citizenship tutoring to his roster of duties. One of the challenges for William is the balancing of his time between his Centro Romero position and school. William is currently enrolled at Concordia University Chicago and is pursuing his masters.

William finds the biggest challenge he faces being both an AmeriCorps member and graduate student is balancing his time. Despite these time limitations, there are many rewards for William in his role. He particularly enjoys seeing his adult learners feel accomplished when they are finally get over anxiety about learning something new. William notices, at times, his adult learners will come with some trepidations about being back in a learning environment.

Outside of AmeriCorps, William enjoys singing, meditation, and art. He likes learning about new cultures especially the language component of a new culture.

Member Spotlight



Patricia McClendon is a first term VOCAL AmeriCorps member. She is currently serving at the Anixter Center. She is originally from Baton Rouge, Louisiana and decided to settle in Chicago after visiting relatives. Even before her term with AmeriCorps, Patricia was actively trying to give back to the Chicago community by working with residents at the Heartland Alliance.

Patricia received her bachelor's degree in Sociology from Southern New Hampshire University this past June. After graduation, she began to look for volunteer opportunities around her and this is when she found about the VOCAL AmeriCorps program. At Anixter Center, Patricia acts as the Literacy Coordinator where her main roles consist of recruiting tutors, working with adult learners, and seeing that the needs of tutors and learners are met.

Patricia finds that one of her biggest challenge in her role is recruiting and maintaining tutors for learners that are waiting to be matched up. Patricia says that there is always a waitlist of adult learners. It is particularly challenging for Patricia because of the type of learners that Anixter Center serves. While it is tutors and learners that can pose a challenge, they are also her biggest reward. Patricia says it is the interaction she has with tutors and learners that is the most rewarding aspect of her time at Anixter Center.

After AmeriCorps, Patricia sees herself either pursuing a masters or attending different classes. She finds time to volunteer at a local food pantry and enjoys reading — she just picked up a copy of *God Help The Child* by Tony Morrison.



The mission of the Anixter Center is to enhance the ability of individuals living with or at risk of disabilities to live, learn, work, and play in the community. Each year, at dozens of locations across greater Chicago, the Center provides an array of services to over 5,000 children and adults, including education, employment, life skills, communication, recreation, health care, counseling, and support.



Willie Meister is a first term VOCAL member at Association House of Chicago located in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Willie grew up in the west suburbs of Chicago and moved to Ohio for college. Willie attended Oberlin College in Ohio, having studied Comparative American Studies.

Before as a VOCAL member, Willie worked various jobs ranging from working in kitchens, mental health crisis worker, and as a CNA in group homes for adults with developmental disabilities. Currently at Association House Willie holds the title of Distance Learning Lab Mentor. In this role, Willie works in the computer lab providing individual and group tutoring for students who are taking credit recovery online classes.

This transitory nature of this role makes building relationships and tutoring in general difficult because students at times can only commit to being there two times per week. Despite these challenges, Willie finds his role and subsequent work extremely rewarding. Willie finds being around these students the best part, they are young and extremely curious meaning they have so much room to grow. Willie mainly works with students who are between 16 and 21.

After his term with AmeriCorps, Willie hopes to continue working with Association House. Willie looks forward to continue working with the youth community through non-profits.



Association House of Chicago serves a multi-cultural community by providing comprehensive, collaborative, and effective programs in English and Spanish. They also work to promote health and wellness as well as creating opportunities for educational and economic advancement. Established all the way back in June of 1899, Association House has been there to grow and adapt to what the community needs.

Upcoming Dates

Friday, March 1st

9:00am - 5:00pm

Quarterly Member Meeting
Swiss Family Roombinson

March 10th-16th

National AmeriCorps Week
Various locations

Get Free Tax Help At –

- ◆ City of Chicago—www.TaxPrepChicago.org
- ◆ Center for Economic Progress—
www.economicprogress.org
- ◆ Ladder Up—www.goladderup.org
- ◆ IRS—www.irs.gov type “free tax help” in search box

MLK Fun Fact

A little known fact perhaps of the King Holiday is that Illinois became the first state in the nation to honor Dr. King by making his birthday, January 15th, a state holiday in 1973. The observance of the day moved to the third Monday of the month when MLK Day became a national holiday in 1986.

LVI's SOCIAL NETWORKS



www.Twitter.com/LVillinois



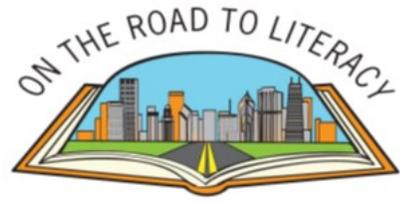
Visit www.Facebook.com/lvillinois and click the “like” button.

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



Follow us at
[Instagram.com/literacyvolunteersofillinois](https://www.instagram.com/literacyvolunteersofillinois)

28th Annual



Tutor and Adult Learner Conference and Awards Presentation

Saturday, March 23rd

9:00 AM-3:00 PM

8:30 a.m. Registration
9:00 a.m. Opening Session
Ben Greer

Illinois Community College Board

9:45 a.m. Workshops—Round One
10:45 a.m. Workshops—Round Two
11:45 a.m. Lunch and Discussion Topics
12:45 p.m. Workshops—Round Two
1:45 p.m. Closing Session

Keynote Speaker

*Juan Salgado, Chancellor
City Colleges of Chicago*

Awards Presentation

UIC Center for Literacy
1040 W. Harrison
Chicago, Illinois

Nominate a Tutor for Tutor of the Year !

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

February

02/24

Timothy White

02/27

Loretta Coleman