



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



Life After AmeriCorps



Robert Guzman from Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition and LVI Staff and VOCAL* AmeriCorps Members

On May 3rd, VOCAL* AmeriCorps members met up at the Near West American Job Center located in the Pilsen neighborhood instead of the LiteraCenter where trainings and meetings are usually held. Friday's training session centered around Career Navigation and was called *Life After AmeriCorps*. The session was led by Robert Guzman, the Career Pathways Navigator for the Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition. This training was one of the required trainings of the year but thanks to Robert Guzman of CCLC, there was a unique spin to the training that day. This training would be focused not only towards members and their career pathways but also that of their clients. The day was full of information and resources from start to finish.

The morning started with an introduction from Robert and how he arrived at his current position with CCLC. It was interesting to see the round about way people arrive at the nonprofit sector. Then introductions were extended to members who introduced themselves by saying in which field they saw themselves, be it in the near or distant future. Responses varied and ranged from health related fields to continuing to work for nonprofits. This was a good way to gauge interest at the beginning. Finally, the function of the Near West American Job Center was introduced to members and would be built upon throughout the day. The American Job Center describes itself as a place where both youths and adults can access employment resources and information about job training and more.

The Near West American Job center houses a variety of different offices and resources and has become an innovative hub for job seekers and career builders, they are even being considered as a case study because of the new work they're doing. Even the role that Robert Guzman plays at the Near West American Job Center is new and was put together by a variety of programs just for him. In addition to information provided by Robert Guzman on what he does for these organizations and the resources he is privy to, members were joined by guest speakers from organizations within the job center who provided labor market information, and information on their respective industries and specialties. The first guest speaker from National Able Network was able to walk members through WIOA Act: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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From the Executive Director...

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The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) announced earlier this month \$562 million in AmeriCorps funding for the coming program year (PY 2020) Nearly half of that figure - \$250 million is for what is know as “competitive” grants , which will go to 368 organizations both local and national that the CNCS has designated for funding; \$140 million is for “formula” funding, which is going to Governor-appointed state service commissions—such as Serve Illinois—to support programs in their respective states and, the final \$172 million is for education scholarships for the estimated 65,000 individuals who will serve as AmeriCorps members in these state and national programs in the coming year.

Of the competitive grants announced by the CNCS, seventeen—totaling \$7,490,543—are going to Illinois programs with the VOCAL program being one of them. In formula funding, \$4,879,714 will go the Serve Illinois Commission, which in turn will provide funds to another 20-25 organizations to sponsor AmeriCorps programs in communities throughout our state.

The funding we are receiving is continuation funding as we are now entering the third year of our three-year program cycle. Our performance measures for the coming year remain the same - to provide one-to-one, small group and classroom instruction in basic literacy skills, ESL and GED to 2,100 economically disadvantaged adults and 300 incarcerated teens and provide job search assistance to 500 economically disadvantaged adults. Volunteer recruitment will also continue to be an important part of our program with a goal of adding 600 tutors into our ranks. Our pilot project with Sunshine Community Services Center in Kewanee will also continue with their members serving in various capacities in Kewanee schools, the Library, YMCA, Salvation Army and Abilities Plus, an agency serving handicapped individuals.

At the national level, this current program year (2019) marked the 25th year of AmeriCorps programming. Since the program’s inception in 1994, the CNCS reported in their funding announcement that more than I million Americans have served as AmeriCorps members and combined they have provided more than 1.5 billion hours of service.

This current year is our 22nd year of AmeriCorps programming and during the last 21 years we have had 814 individuals engaged in service - 229 were members of Project UPLIFT, which was a precursor of the VOCAL program, while the remaining 585 served as VOCAL* AmeriCorps members. The VOCAL program began in October 2003 and through August of last year—15 years—over 32,000 economically disadvantaged adults and incarcerated teens have been provided with GED, basic literacy and ESL instruction and job search assistance. And, with the help of the members over 6,400 tutors have been added to the ranks of the host sites.

Currently, we have 39 members who are serving in a mix of full-time, part-time, quarter time and minimum-time positions serving at 22 host sites. At mid-year, sites reported serving over 2,400 adults. Great job !

Life After AmeriCorps (Cont.)



VOCAL member, Galine, from Wabunsee Community College

WIOA is a federal workforce development initiative aimed at increasing coordination among federal workforce development and related programs. Not only was this initiative briefly explained but also the ways in which members and their clients could use it to fund potential training.

The same speaker then went on to speak about technology training opportunities, breaking into the IT field and its accompanying job prospects. She then tied both of these subjects together by telling members the ways in which they could apply for funding through WIOA to attend these trainings or others. Some Representatives from *Instituto del Progreso Latino*, one of Literacy Volunteers of Illinois' host sites, spoke to members about in-house training opportunities in health related fields and more commercial-retail experience. To further expand on the health sector interests that members expressed at the beginning, a representative from Saint Anthony's hospital came to speak. On the brink of an expansion, the representative from that particular organization spoke on the career opportunities and growth within the field and hospital specifically.



VOCAL member, Temothy, from Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition

After breaking for lunch, an opportunity for member to see more of the Pilsen neighborhood, the training resumed with a representative from National Able who specialized in resumes. He was able to give an insight into how companies use software to sort through incoming resumes and the different ways in which members could use this system to their advantage instead of their resumes being bypassed by the software. Aside from formatting tools, the National Able representative was able to expand on the responsiveness to resumes by showing members a website in which they could scan their resumes to be cross-checked with their desired jobs listing. Outside of this advice, he encouraged members to seek his services at the Job Center. Members were also able to hear from two state employees from the Illinois Department of Employment Security who spoke on their experiences working as state employees as well as the programs which they represented.

The second state employee, Christopher L Robinson, who worked as the Veterans Business Specialist was able to give more pointed information for two of the veteran members. However, this information could prove to be useful when working with clients who are veterans themselves. After his presentation, CCLC took the opportunity to bring in Michael Matos to speak on an app that they're launching in collaboration with X-prize. CCLC wanted to share a great resource for tutors that they could

then share with their clients and students. This was a welcomed break from the information being presented to members that day.

All the speakers that day were not only able to speak about their specific organizations but were also able to share with members stories of how they arrived at their position, which could give members a perspective on how to navigate these different fields. Robert, in addition to his guest speakers, was able to guide members through the different opportunities from training to careers. One of the areas which Robert stressed was the idea of networking or just being aware of the connections that members can make just by being in this field. At the end of the training members were able to walk away with not only a new building full of resources but also a new understanding of what career pathways could mean for them and their clients.

Member Training, Business Side of Nonprofits



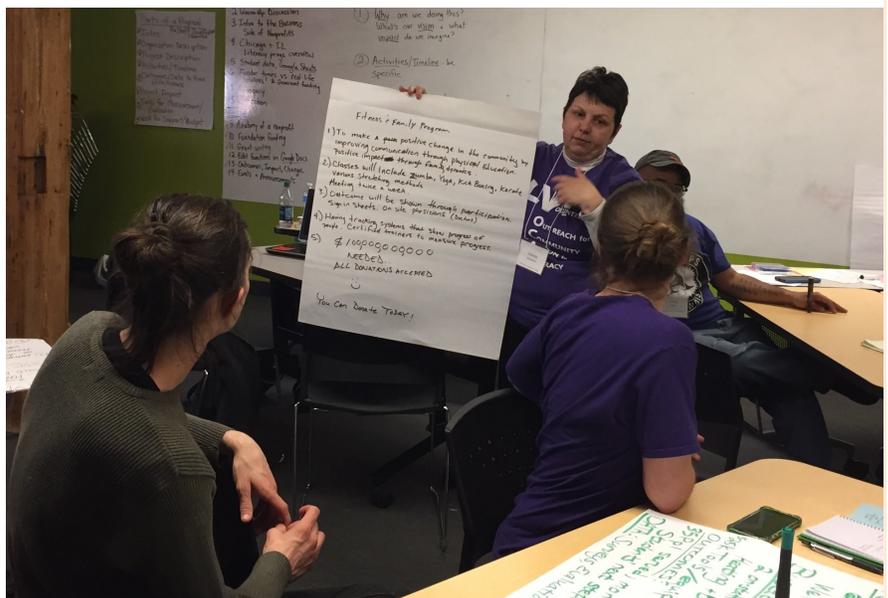
VOCAL members learning about data management in Google Sheets

On April 5th VOCAL* AmeriCorps members came together for a training session led by Becky DeForest from Literacy Works. This training was the third installment of three planned sessions being presented by Literacy Works for VOCAL Members. The third installment centered around what is being dubbed: The Business Side of Nonprofits. Members were introduced to the technicalities of how non-profits work as well as the technicalities of running a nonprofit.

During their AmeriCorps term at their respective nonprofits, members have had to learn as they go about the ways that nonprofits operate and specifically nonprofits centered around adult-education. This

training was meant to give members a concrete understanding of the field in which they've been working. A large part of the day was spent understanding the different grants at play in the adult education sphere. Members learned about two major government funders of adult education in Illinois: Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Secretary of State. Becky was able to map out the different ways in which SOS and ICCB funding is distributed to various organizations. Besides these two institutions, the concepts of grants from foundations and private donations were also delved into.

After funding sources for nonprofits were explained, Becky started to introduce grant writing to the members. Members began to identify different structures of a grant and how they fit together to make-up a compelling argument for funding. Not only did members get some practice interacting with grant proposals but also were able to make some improvements to example proposals. This brought the discussion around to some of the tensions that exist between what funders require of grantees and what programs are actually able to realistically accomplish. This gave members an insight into what goes on in their organizations that they are not always able to see. Members were able to get an understanding of the multiple roles staff and volunteers must play for their organizations to work partly due to the previously mentioned tensions. The understanding of grants gave members a better perspective on the running of a successful program, even if they are never tasked with grant writing.



VOCAL member, Galina, presenting her funding proposal

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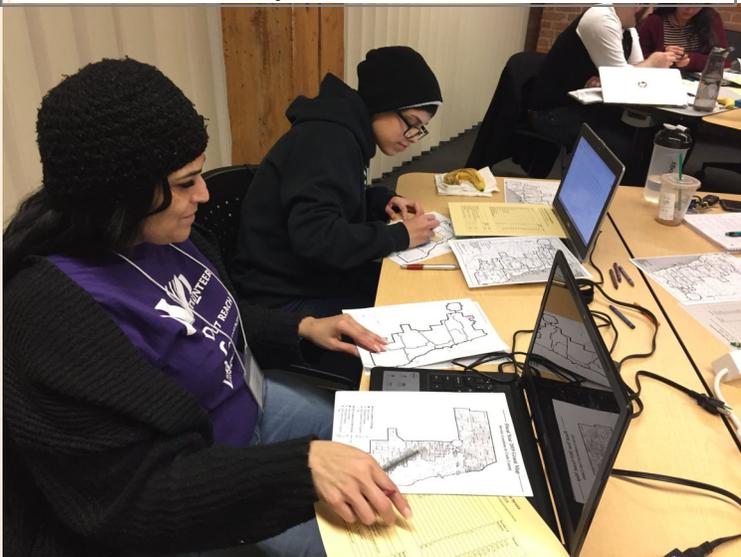
Business Side of Non-Profits (Cont.)



Galina and Timothy attending the May training,



Colin and Sujae work on data visualization



Cecilia and Z work on data visualization

Part of the understanding of funding and the running of programs includes the management of data. Becky was able to show members how to incorporate digital programs such as Excel and Google Sheets, programs that many nonprofits use, in order to manage their program data. This was essential concept when working in the adult education sector because in order to receive and maintain funding, programs must be able to produce data. This aspect of nonprofits was explored by allowing members to work within example documents and then learning how to use formulas to make working within these documents more efficient. Becky was able to further give members tools to visualize and manage data through the use of maps in addition to spread sheets.

At the end of the day, members were given the opportunity to use some of these new skills and knowledge to create a fictitious nonprofit and then write a grant proposal for their nonprofit. There were so many great ideas for future nonprofits. This was a great way for members to use all the information they learned that day from realistic outcomes for nonprofits to what funding bodies are looking for in programs. Each presentation was a collaborative effort, fellow members were able to give feedback to the presenting group based on what they learned that day. Ideas ranged from a self-sustaining mechanic/ auto repair nonprofit to a food pantry.

This training gave members a better understanding of the field in which they work. Members with this new understanding are then able to serve their clients better because they now understand the reasoning behind some of the goals they have to meet or even how and why their students' progress is being recorded. It is hard at first for AmeriCorps members to come into their role with limited knowledge on how their organizations are able to serve their clients. This training proved helpful to demystifying some of the behind-the-scenes workings of their organizations. The training: Business Behind Nonprofits proved a huge success thanks to Becky DeForest from Literacy Works. Members left this training with a lot of new information that would make them feel more secure in their role.

Member Spotlight



Emily Erland is a second term VOCAL*AmeriCorps member from a small town in Tennessee near Nashville. She moved to the suburbs of Chicago for her graduate studies at Trinity College. Right after finishing her masters program in 2017, she began her AmeriCorps service at World Relief Chicago.

At World Relief Chicago, Emily is a ESL tutor coordinator and also helps as a teacher assistant. Emily, in this role, coordinates volunteers who help in the various classrooms, helps volunteers connect with each other. She coordinates tutors who go tutor her organization's clients in their home for 2 hours every week. She mainly works in the education department with teachers. Her organization is currently undergoing changes as they will not be resettling refugees which has seen Emily's work shift alongside the organization. She describes her work after these organizational shifts as being more focused on on-site tutor partnerships with local churches and volunteer groups.

Emily decided to return for a second term at her same organization because she loved the role she was playing, the connections she made working directly with clients and volunteers, as well as the team with which she worked. She notes that a bulk of the work she was doing has changed from her first term because of the drastic change in the clients whom they're serving as well as the shift in staff members' positions. Despite the difficulties these changes have brought, Emily still finds the work she is doing extremely rewarding. She enjoys the learning that happens on both sides of the tutor and client relationship. Not only are clients learning from their tutors but tutors are also able to learn something from their students. She has also experienced positive personal growth in her role. Alongside this growth, she has gained an appreciation for immigrant and refugee populations in a way that she was not able to before.

Outside of AmeriCorps, Emily enjoys being outside and in nature. She particularly enjoys being active outside whether it be bike riding or running. She also likes reading and writing. She is currently reading Haruki Murakami and highly recommends it.



World Relief Chicago engages communities to foster dignity and wholeness for immigrants and refugees in transition. English language and literacy development to obtain employment and integrate more fully into the Chicago community is a key avenue that World Relief uses to accomplish its mission. Education services include intensive English Language Training part-time ESL programming, family literacy and in-home tutoring. Also offers weekly employment preparation and cultural adjustment training.

Esther Tscheppler is a first term VOCAL*AmeriCorps member who is currently serving at World Relief DuPage/Aurora. Originally from Colorado Springs, Esther moved to Illinois to attend graduate school. She is currently completing her Masters at Wheaton College in TESL. Having just started her Masters this year, Esther decided she would join AmeriCorps while working on her degree. Before AmeriCorps and her graduate studies, Esther spent 5 years in Uganda completing her bachelors. Esther knew she was interested in languages before heading over to East Africa and after a year decided to take the jump and enroll. Esther is the After Schools Program Coordinator at World Relief Dupage. In this role, she takes on the duties of supervising tutors, coordinating with schools, as well as case noting. She sees herself being busy with planning for summer programs after the end of the school year.

One of the challenges she faces in this role is keeping good and detailed records so that they can be passed on. Having started later than some other members, there was a lot of onboarding tasks to catch up on for Esther. She had to balance orienting new volunteers as well supporting the ones who were already on the ground before she began.

Overall, Esther enjoys being in the environment that World Relief has fostered, seeing it all in action. She feels good that she is able to help facilitate that by being in this supporting role.

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Member Spotlight Cont.

Outside of the rewards of her supportive role, Esther likes just getting to know tutors and the children from the afterschool programs.

After her term with VOCAL*AmeriCorps and graduate studies, Esther sees herself teaching English overseas. She is interested in the cross-cultural opportunities that would bring, specifically in another East African country or the Middle East. This is why she found her year with AmeriCorps so informative to her. Outside of AmeriCorps, Esther enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and playing the flute and piano. She is currently reading *Hiding from Love* by John Townsend.

world relief®
DUPAGE/AURORA

World Relief DuPage/Aurora (WRDA) serves the immigrant and refugee communities in DuPage County and greater Aurora, empowering local churches to see the most vulnerable people transformed economically, socially, and spiritually. WRDA's Social Services program provides immigrants and refugees with the support and tools needed to achieve stability and move toward integration into their local community including case management, employment services, children and youth services, mental health counseling, and Education/ESL programming.



Jump Start at the Illinois Youth Centers (IYC) is a one-to-one tutoring and mentoring program operating in the Illinois Youth Centers (IYC) of the Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ). It is a joint venture between Literacy Volunteers of Illinois and School District #428 of the IDJJ. The program has also received support from the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA), and was originally funded by a three year grant from the Retirement Research Foundation. Current funding comes from School District #428, the Literacy Office of the Illinois State Library, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and donations from individual contributors and area businesses.



Katrina Mioduszewski is a first term AmeriCorps member serving in LVI's Jump Start program at the Illinois Youth Center in Chicago. They (preferred pronoun) were born in Des Plaines but grew up and live in Elmwood Park. They are a senior at Elmhurst College studying Sociology, Urban Studies, and Intercultural studies and will be graduating very soon. It was actually at Elmhurst College where they met Dorothy Miaso, LVI's Executive Director, at a career fair. This encounter came at a seminal point during Katrina's undergrad studies as they were just starting to become interested in the topic of mass incarceration and saw this as an opportunity to work directly in the field of youth incarceration. They became passionate about topics of social justice and systems of oppression in the United States.

Their title at the IYC-Chicago is Literary Specialist, under this title they dedicate themselves to tutoring, helping youth with their High school courses, GED prep, and participating in resource sharing in the Jump Start programs. Outside of tutoring, Katrina is currently co-heading a poetry contest. They also support the other programs inside the IYC by attending the various activities and events put on by those groups. One of the challenges, they face is relating to the youth without overstepping any boundaries. They want to get to know them and connect with them though the youth are there ultimately to learn. On the flipside of these challenges, Katrina enjoys seeing students genuinely want to progress in their course work or complete their high school studies.

After their time at AmeriCorps, Katrina wants to continue engaging in various social justice topics. They see themselves pursuing a masters degree in a similar field and eventually teach. In the more short term future, they are expected to graduate from Elmhurst College. During their undergraduate years they have headed various events which continued to explore the various social topics that interested them. Most recently they headed a discussion workshop centered around immigration and invited a fellow member from Centro Sin Fronteras to shed some light on the subject.

Outside of their volunteer and school work, Katrina also has a part-time job at Barnes and Noble. So when they are not spending their time studying or tutoring they are able to work part time. They are also excited to be hosting an event in which an LVI staff and member will be discussing activism and community organizing.

Upcoming Dates

May 27th
Memorial Day

Friday, June 7th
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Quarterly Member Meeting
Swiss Family Room
Literacenter

July TBA
Tailgate and White Sox Game

Trainings

Clear Language Lab
Literacy Works
June 13th

Introduction to Plain Design
Literacy Works
June 13th

For more details contact
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ICOVA 2019

**ILLINOIS CONFERENCE ON
VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION**

AUGUST 9, 2019

illinoiscova@gmail.com

★ **HAPPY** ★
BIRTHDAY!

Madelyn Damron - May 9th
Esther Tschappler - May 11th
Olivia Landon - May 22nd

Angel Lutz - June 6th
Tonya Watkins-Jones - June 12th