June 2020 Making A Difference ~ Making A Change

VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

Member Perspective: Final Quarterly Meeting

Program Year 2019-2020 has been a journey. For our members, our host sites, and our communities, and through it all, our AmeriCorps members have stayed strong. It has not been an easy transition, dealing with the changed landscape, and all the challenges that come with the increased need and strained resources, but through it all, our members—my colleagues—remain committed to their service, their clients, and doing all they can to assist people in a time of such need; and during a year with so many changes and challenges, when it came to do our last formal check-in, we got to hear more about their experiences in detail.

The virtual session began with Executive Director Dorothy Miaso affirming that all the members were eligible to renew for the next session in the fall—whether it be to continue at their current host site, a new one, or even travel to other states and Puerto Rico, should they desire—and it is an option that several members stated they would be taking. Additional business included discussing how mid-term evaluations got set back, due to the COVID pandemic striking during the middle of March; however, while the part-time me for full-time members, they do need to have two evaluations on file. Additionally, we were introduced to a new member, Natalie Martinez, who is serving with the Waukegan Public Library.

After that, the members began to share their experiences during the pandemic, which, despite the change in circumstance, did not necessarily change some members' duties radically. Tutoring still occurred, with our members assisting them with finding resources, tracking student progress, and recruiting. One of our host sites, Literacy Works, has continued their Tutor Essentials trainings, which meant that adult literacy programs could continue getting their volunteers trained, as they transitioned their trainings to virtual. Some our members also have been getting to assist their clients fill out their taxes, job hunt, and practice their English. One of our members took advantage of doing her ESL classes through ZOOM to invite guest speakers, so that students could hear other voices than hers, and also get more conversation examples. Others have provided care packages for foster kids and providing health tips.

With all the ways that our members have been stepping up, it was rewarding to hear their passion and excitement for addressing the needs on hand. While the future may seem uncertain—with their host sites going through phases to reopen and the job hunting for life after service—our members showed their heart to make the present the best it can be.

— *Colin Herzog*
Team Leader

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Solange Abreu
Jun 11, 2020

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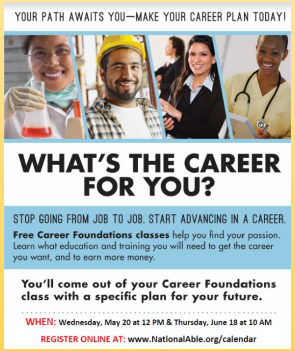

Life After AmeriCorps

And More … !

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From the Executive Director ...

We're in the final stretch of this program year and in roughly two months, August 31st - the term of service that most members signed up for will come to an end. To our members, this was a particularly trying year – in fact, still is – but I hope that the time each of you has spent as an AmeriCorps member is everything you thought it would be and more. I hope also that it has helped to instill in all of you a commitment to a "lifetime of service", which is a maxim and a goal of the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps program.

Service happens in many forms and opportunities to continue service abound. For some of you, a decision to pursue a career in public service in education, social work, heath care, or advocacy, among still others, may have already been made. Public service can also entail running for office and can be as basic as serving on a local school council. Something I did for two terms, winning by just one vote each time, which shows that every vote counts !

After having served in the voluntary sector this past year, you are all likely well aware of the manpower needs of community-based organizations, and I hope you will continue to offer your time and experience to your host site or another in the non-profit sector. This can be as a volunteer tutor or instructor, a member of a Board of Directors or Board committee, or even a program or event planning committee. Consider also LVI as we would love to have to have your continued involvement in program planning, especially for the VOCAL program

Finally, all charitable organizations including your host site and LVI have financial needs, so as you progress in your careers and your time becomes less available consider the impact that your dollars can have !

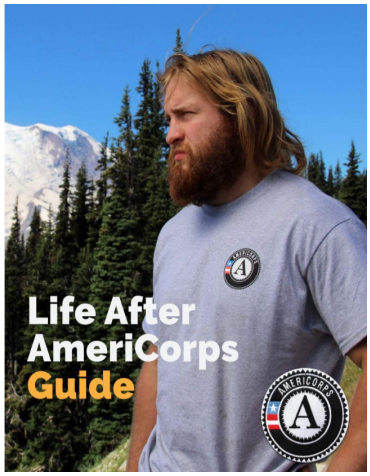
For members considering a second year, good news – we received notice of grant renewal ! Our funding for this grant cycle is from Serve Illinois, as we did not make the competitive cut with the Corporation for National and Community Service in this round of grant-making. We will be a little smaller in corps size this year, but we were funded at our request of 24 FTE (full-time equivalent), which will be a mix of full (1,700 hours), part (900 Hours) and minimum-time (300 hours) members. Further information on member and host site renewal will follow.

On behalf of the Board and Staff of LVI, I thank you all – members, host sites, trainers, and program supporters – for being a part of our VOCAL* AmeriCorps program this past year. As this year ends another as noted begins. Member recruitment for Program Year 2021 is now underway so we welcome your referrals of family, friends, and even casual acquaintances. Applications can be submitted online directly through the AmeriCorps website or our website which will take you to the AmeriCorps site. Paper applications can also be downloaded from our website and mailed or faxed in – online is preferred.

Still looking towards that end-of-the-year celebration !

Plans for the Future: Life After AmeriCorps

On Friday, May 29th and Friday, June 12th AmeriCorps members got to participate in the annual L*ife After AmeriCorps* training. Unlike previous years, we were unable to meet in person, but through online video chats, we were able to adapt and effectively engage the members and provide them more tools that can further their success once their tenure has completed.



Day 1 was led by Member Coordinator Gabriel Perez, who walked the members through some specific channels that, as AmeriCorps members, they have access to. These include the AmeriCorps Alumni network, navigating the re-enlisting process, how to convey their AmeriCorps experience for their resume, and using their Segal Education Award to further their academic careers. Otherwise, he also touched on more tangible job hunting skills, such as resume development and LinkedIn profile management, and steered the members towards different job hunting sites; there were the more traditional sites such as LinkedIn, Idealist, Indeed, and Monster, but he also drew members' attention to Employers of National Service and jobs through AmeriCorps Alums. He did allude to pursuing careers in local, state, or federal government, and refer members to the USAJobs website, but the majority of the specifics were saved for Day 2, which focused on the Public Sector.

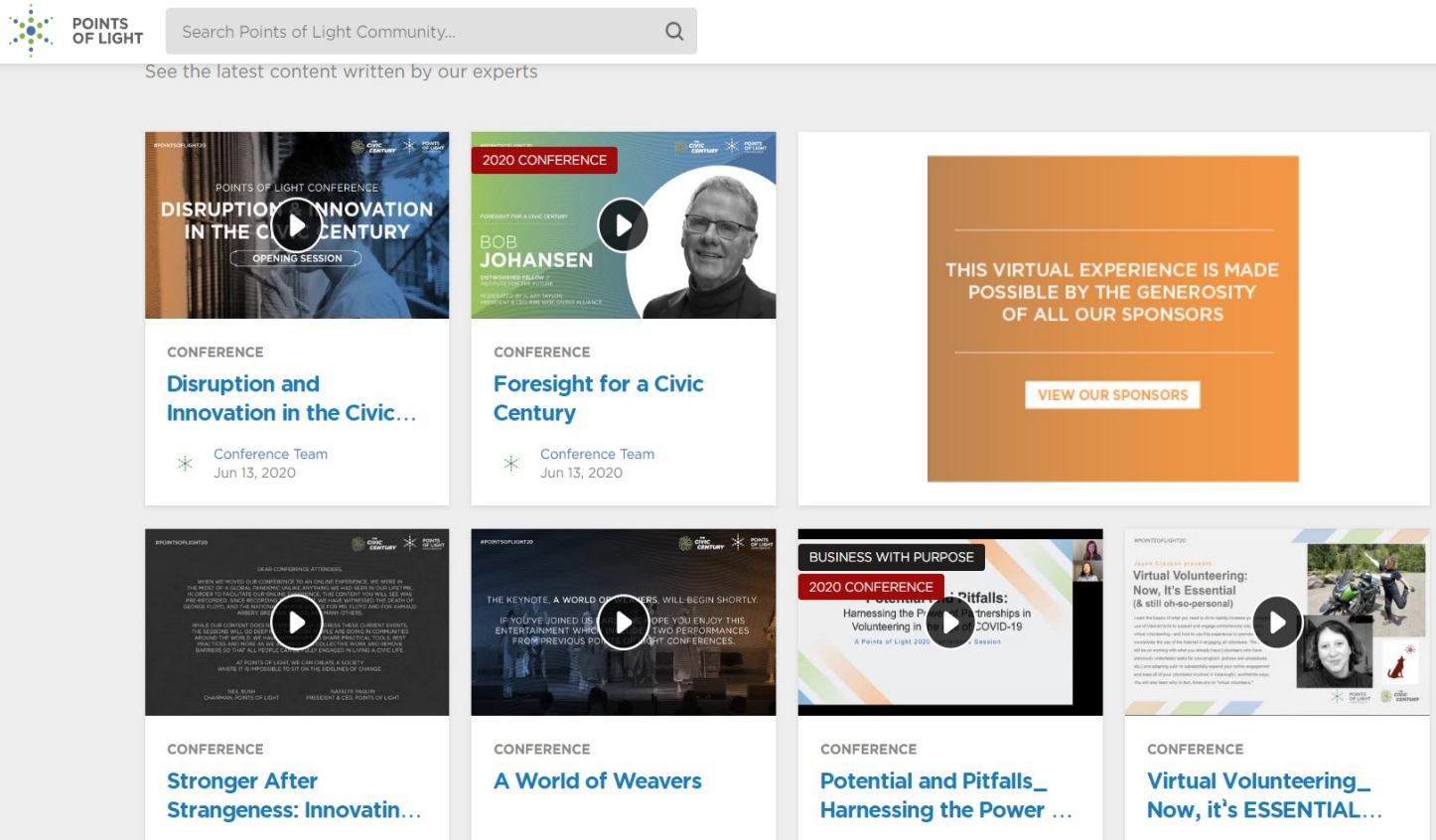
Day 2, which took place two weeks later because of the Quarterly Meeting, was led by Executive Director Dorothy Miaso. Drawing from her vast experience in state and nonprofit work, she guided the members through two avenues of the public sector: government jobs and nonprofits. Starting with government jobs, she observed that the government makes up 16.7% of the total U.S. workforce, with local governments retaining the lion's share of those government workers, with 63%. Typically someone can either be appointed to a position or go through the civil testing process, at which point she introduced the members to USAJobs.Gov and the Work4Illinois site, as well as distinguishing between the possibilities for avenues between the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches, respectively.—however, she noted that typically, for jobs with the Judiciary or the General Assembly, they tend to be more appointees and may not be posted often.

Once the members finished discussing government paths, Executive Director Miaso discussed other nonprofit avenues, such as education, including elementary, high school, universities and colleges; in those options, AmeriCorps members could pursue research, administrative, or teaching positions. Additionally, she took a look and outlined the different types of nonprofits, the variation between geographical scope of their duties before narrowing down to local organizations that work with Adult Literacy and Education, and assisting with Pre-GED, GED, and ESL classes. Echoing the nonprofit job hunting websites as Program Coordinator Perez, she does mention that with a master's degree, it does open some additional doors, beyond part-time teaching.

Ultimately, despite the circumstances, the VOCAL team was able to educate and prepare their members for post-AmeriCorps life as well as they can: with the ever-shifting sands that have comprised 2020's landscape, VOCAL continues to work to impress upon its volunteers the skills needed to take the next steps and continue to be of service to their communities.

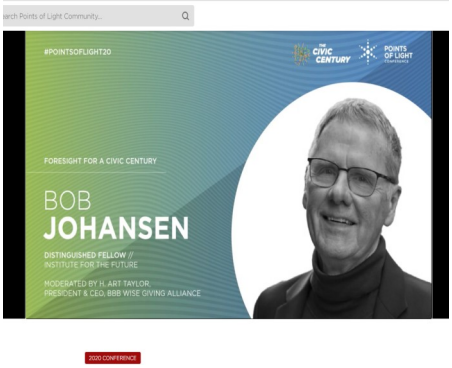
- Colin Herzog

Note: A PDF of Jobs in the Public Sector is available in Member Resources on our website.



Points of Light Goes Virtual

From Wednesday, June 10th to Friday, June 12th LVI staff and VOCAL members attended the Points of Light conference. Due to the pandemic, this year, the conference had to adjust their plan to host it in Washington D.C.; instead, they opted to create an online conference, where instead of live streams, they pre-recorded many of their sessions, and made them all available, so that attendees could review them at their own pace. Additionally, they opted to make registration free for attendees, and while during the registration process, you could select specific panels, once logged in, they were all open to check out at your leisure.



The LVI team then was able to attend, exploring panels about virtual volunteering, collaborating with the private sector, volunteer engagement, organizational communications, and more. Popular among the VOCAL team was the "Virtual Volunteering—Now, It's ESSENTIAL" by Jayne Cravens, particularly in light of how the pandemic has so severely impacted service, how we interact with and recruit volunteers, and the avenues for opportunities to further assist our communities. Other standouts were "Foresight for a Civic Century" by Bob Johnsen, "Turning the Titanic—an Organizational Change Story" by Ellen Ray, and "Game On! Playing for Keeps with Volunteers," by Todd McMullin, Dana Litwin, and the National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement. Despite some minor difficulties logging in, the VOCAL team greatly appreciated the opportunity to attend the conference, and found some valuable insights that can be utilized in the future.

Likewise, with the changing landscape, the team also was able to learn lessons that could be applicable for our own conferences and collaborations, whether it be for the upcoming ICOVA conference, which will be a virtual event, or possibilities for next year's On the Road to Literacy Conference, it was a learning experience for all involved, and one that was a great success,.

- Colin Herzog

Member Spotlight: Patricia McClendon

Patricia McClendon is a second year member and serves as an After School Club Coordinator at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association. Originally from Louisiana, she graduated Cum Laude from Southern New Hampshire UNIVERSITY with a bachelors in Sociology. She heard of AmeriCorps as she was looking for volunteer opportunities after graduating in 2018, and came across the Literacy Volunteers of Illinois on Volunteer Match.

At CMAA, she serves in the Adult Education and Workforce Departments where she tutors students individual and in group settings, and helps workforce clients with their with their job search and resume building. She also updates databases and assists students with their literacy and employment goals, and assisting classes as needed. Her duties haven't changed much on the front of dealing with literacy, but she has had to adapt to also serving with the workforce department and their clients. Recruiting tutors is a challenge, but she is finding it rewarding to help someone learn something they didn't know before. She is currently considering another year of service, but regardless of what she decides, she wants to continue to help others. Besides serving, she enjoys reading and playing puzzle games to keep her mind sharp.

Chinese Mutual Aid Association is a fast-paced organization dedicated to fostering the integration of the Pan-Asian immigrant and refugee community into U.S. culture. Established in 1981, CMAA has become a cornerstone of the Uptown community, providing programming for generations of low-income youth, adults, and senior citizens. The Adult Education and Workforce Department provides English as a Second Language, Financial Literacy, Computer classes, and assists clients with transitioning into the workforce, through workshops and individualized counseling

Member Spotlight: Dean Martin

Dean Martin is a part-time member in his second service term. Originally from Chicago, he heard of AmeriCorps as he was seeking a return to the workforce following a leave of absence to take care of family. With a background in non-profits and wanting to help people, he saw the Association House listing and applied.

As the AmeriCorps Workforce Development Facilitator at Association House, his duties include finding employment partners for job listings and placements for his clients, helping clients build resumes, and assisting them in developing their employment search plans. Even after they gets a job, he continues advising and assisting to keep them employed. Challenges encountered include keeping his case notes and folders up-to-date and getting clients to follow-up after getting a job. Still, he likes helping people get employed. In the future, Dean wants to go back to school and finish his degree in social work at DePaul University. Outside of service, he enjoys going to movies, eating out, and walking around Chicago. At his core, he serves because he feels he is community-orientated and as a servant of the lord, should serve people.

Since 1899, Association House has worked with Chicagoans who seek tools to lead more productive lives. It is one of the oldest "settlement houses" in Chicago originally designed to provide relief and guidance to new immigrants. Today, it is a vital resource to underserved, multicultural communities, providing collaborative programs in English and Spanish in health and wellness, educational advancement, and economic empowerment. With a staff of over 200, Association House impacts the lives of nearly 20,000 children, individuals and families annually in Humboldt Park, West Town, Logan Square, Avondale, Hermosa and surrounding communities.

Member Spotlight: Katrina Mioduszewski

Katrina Mioduszewski is a second-term AmeriCorps member, serving with LVI's Jump Start program. From Elmwood Park, Illinois, she attended Elmhurst College, where she majored in Sociology, Intercultural Studies, and Urban Studies. While at Elmhurst, she met Dorothy Miaso at a career fair, and became interested in in Jump Start, which works with incarcerated youth. She served minimum-time her first year as a tutor at IYC-Chicago; this year she is working with the Lit for Life component where she is assisting with grant writing, building contacts with workforce development organizations in Chicago for youth, developing life skills lesson plans, and researching juvenile justice issues.

Katrina began full-time service this year at Mercy Home for Boys & Girls where she was a Youth Care Worker; however, due to COVID, the program shut down and she was able to transfer to LVI. Challenges do arise, such as not being able to make new contacts with youth and not being able to reach youth that have been released. Still, she finds it rewarding to find out about other organizations, and meeting new people who are passionate about connecting youth to resources that will build their future.

After service she plans to attend UIC for a Masters in Social Work, and get a field placement at the Chicago Torture Justice Center.

LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF ILLINOIS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois (LVI) is a statewide organization committed to developing and supporting volunteer literacy programs. LVI is a leader in the national service having placed over 800 VISTA and AmeriCorps members in over150 adult, family literacy, and Head Start programs throughout the state. LVI is the founder of the Jump Start program which, in cooperation with School District #428 of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, recruits, trains and matches volunteers to serve as tutors to youth residing in the Illinois Youth Centers. In FY 2019, the program provided 373 youth at four Illinois Youth Centers with 3,486 hours of instruction through 59 volunteers.

Member Spotlight: Natalie Martinez

Natalie Martinez, from Beach Park, Illinois, is a first-term minimum-time AmeriCorps member, who began service this past month at the Waukegan Public Library. She graduated this past Spring from the College Lake County with an Associates of Arts and is planning to major in Communications in the future. She heard about AmeriCorps from her sister, who works as Waukegan Public Library's Conversational ESL Assistant and once the AmeriCorps position opened up, the Education and Literacy Services manager at the library recommended she apply.

Her duties with the Library's Adult Education and Literacy Program include tutoring ESL groups, leading group discussions, and lesson planning. She does not feel that she has had many challenges thus far, beyond having to work from home due to COVID-19. While she is disappointed that she has not been able to tutor in-person or build as many relationships with the library's staff as she hoped, she finds it rewarding to work with students, even if it is via video chat, and has learned many things, from time management to webinars about teaching. When she is not serving, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, and being outdoors riding her bike or resting in her hammock.

WAUKEGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Waukegan Public Library's vision is for a community that recognizes the importance of learning and is invested in its success. To foster this kind of environment, the library is committed to maintaining active community engagement to ensure that our classes, programming, collection, library services, and exhibits are continuously reevaluated to ensure that it is relevant to the community's literacy, learning, and discovery needs. Additionally, the library will work to help patrons recognize the ways in which literacy is essential to their lives, as well as to broaden horizons and provide unique, enriching experiences.

Member Spotlight: Hope Wetlesen

Hope Wetlesen is a first year full-time AmeriCorps member from Germany and Colorado--as she is from a military family, she has lived all over the world. Prior to AmeriCorps, Hope attended Moody Bible College, where she received a degree in Applied Linguistics. She heard of World Relief Chicago from school, when a representative gave a talk there. As an ESL Tutor Coordinator, her duties include providing information sessions to volunteers, representing World Relief on the North Side Literacy Coalition, working on grants, finding learning resources, and facilitating tutor-student relationships.

Challenges include finding new funding sources for their adult education program, and meeting client needs beyond ESL including housing and utility bill assistance. Despite he challenges she navigates, she enjoys the work and finds it rewarding to meet people from all over and help others. She wants to get a masters in TESOL and to teach overseas. When she isn't serving, she trains to run marathons. Ultimately, she serves because with the knowledge that people are born in terrible situations and have had to come here for shelter, she feels that as a Christian, she has a joy and a duty to help others.

world relief™ CHICAGO

World Relief-Chicago's mission is to engage 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.

Member Spotlight: Autumn Zigterman

Autumn Zigterman is a full-time, first-term AmeriCorps member who serves as the Volunteer Coordinator for Resettlement Services at World Relief Chicago. After receiving her Bachelor's in Psychology from Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota last May, she learned of AmeriCorps from a family member who had been an AmeriCorps member previously, as she was considering taking a gap year. She applied for the opening and began service soon thereafter. Her duties as volunteer coordinator include matching families with tutors, volunteer outreach, monitoring tutor pairs and their progress, and handling workshops and parent-teacher conferences.

Her duties can be challenging, as she finds some volunteers don't communicate or provide input when asked. Still, it is rewarding to be exposed to different family backgrounds and she enjoys the opportunity to recruit others to carry out this work as well as make use of her public speaking. skills After her AmeriCorps service, she plans s to go to graduate school for marriage and family therapy. When she is not engaged in service, she enjoys Netflix, podcasts, spending time with friends, reading and sports.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Member Spotlight: Juana Nunez

Originally from Chicago, **Juana Nunez** is a first-year part-time AmeriCorps member serving with World Relief DuPage/Aurora. She attended Elmhurst College where she received a Bachelor's in Psychology. She interned with World Relief over the summer and her supervisor mentioned they had an AmeriCorps position coming up, and she applied.

At World Relied DuPage Juana has been serving in the After School Program at two elementary schools where she supervises tutors and provides them with needed resources, tracks student progress, meets with parents, and will soon be assisting with special summer=time programming. Challenges she faces are that tutors are sometimes unavailable so it is harder for the kids to form ongoing relationships with them. Otherwise, she finds it rewarding to watch kids improve. After AmeriCorps service, she plans to attend graduate school for social work. When she is not serving, she likes to work out, spend time with friends, and watch movies and read.

world relief
DUPAGE/AURORA

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

Upcoming Dates

July 6th
Literacenter Opens

Mid-August
Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration
Where Do We Go From Here
Virtual Event - Free Registration

LVI Social Media

www.Twitter.com/LVIllinois

Visit www.Facebook.com/lvillinois
click "like"
Join the VOCAL AmeriCorps Facebook Group

Follow us on Instagram
@literacyvolunteersofillinois

Happy Birthday!

June
Zilagi Velasco 06/30

July
Brittany Grier 7/01
Cecilia Garcia 7/08
Sophia Rodriguez 7/13
Dean Martin 7/24
Juana Nuñez 7/26
Gabi Mulder 7/28
Kari Sturtivant 7/29

Belated Wishes

May
Valerie Painter 5/13
Natalie Martinez 05/23