



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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White Awards Students & Tutors for Literacy Achievements

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White presented 10 literacy students and 10 volunteer tutors with Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service awards today.

The students were nominated from over 29,000 literacy students and the volunteers were nominated from over 14,000 volunteers. As Secretary of State, White oversees Illinois' \$8.4 million literacy program.

"I want to congratulate each of these students today for overcoming major obstacles in their lives," said White. "They have worked hard to meet their goals. They have learned to read, obtained a better job, passed the GED. Now they can read to their children and help them with schoolwork, communicate better with their children's teachers and doctors or obtain a driver's license. We are proud of their accomplishments."

The student awards are based on progress in class, life changes due to literacy tutoring, community service and the obstacles the students have overcome to learn to read. The tutor awards are based on exemplary service and dedication to helping students.

"I also want to thank and commend the tutors who have helped so many adults and children improve their lives through our literacy programs," said White. "You have made a difference in lives of others and are heroes to the families and people you have helped."

Cheryl Wormley of the Illinois Press Association, which sponsors the monetary awards, helped present the awards. Each winner was presented with a check for \$100, plaque and a personalized blue book. The tutors' checks are made payable to the program for which they volunteer.

The Illinois Press Association, Illinois Literacy Foundation and the Secretary of State's office sponsor the awards. The awards were presented at lunch on May 19 during the Family Literacy Conference at the Renaissance Hotel in Springfield. The conference is sponsored by the Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center.

The list of Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service award winners is attached.

FY2000 SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVEMENT WINNERS MAY 19, 2000

Robert Brown, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago Robert was able to reach his longtime goal to start his own home cleaning business by improving his basic skills. In addition to being able to read street signs better, make a shopping list, read to his grandchildren, he is better able to draw up proposals and contracts for his business. He is also able to communicate better with his children because he uses words more easily. Even with a very busy schedule, Robert has a nearly perfect attendance record at Blue Gargoyle's evening classes. He is a very dedicated student.

Ethel Davis, Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville After enrolling in Even Start classes, Ethel worked at home with a tutor and passed the GED test two weeks before delivery of her fifth baby. Ethel set an example for her children studying at the kitchen table side by side with her daughter. She became involved with her children at school and volunteered to be the Brownie leader and Cub Scout leader for her children's troops. After attaining her GED, Ethel went on to nurse assistant training and has become certified to work fulltime in a nursing home on the Alzheimer's wing. The special challenges of this job have been met with professionalism and rewarded with salary increases. Ethel has set new goals. She wants to go back to school to be a physical therapist or become a registered nurse.

She is a wonderful role model to other families in the Even Start program.

Daniel Gaspar, Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan Daniel is very focused on his learning goals. He has improved his reading skills, can write checks and not have his wife check them, has registered to vote and is making the arrangements for food and entertainment for the LVA New Readers for Life conference. He has even written a letter to Secretary White suggesting improvements for the parking stickers for the disabled. He once told another student that the literacy program was "family" and they're here for you if you need any support. Daniel is a very giving person and wants to give back to the community that has helped him so much. Daniel's tutor, Teta Minuzzo, is also a Spotlight on Service winner. Congratulations to both of you!

Blandina Hermez, Albany Park Community Center, Chicago Blandina emigrated from Syria in 1993. She attended classes at Albany Park Community Center to learn to read, write, speak and understand English. This has enabled her to achieve important objectives such as being promoted to the position of inspector at her job and receiving a pay raise. She has also obtained her driver's license, becoming the only driver in her family and improving their quality of life. All of her hard work has been recently rewarded by obtaining her U.S. citizenship. Blandina talks to other Assyrians in the area convincing many to come to school and becoming an advocate for their needs.

Elisa, Veronica and Maribel Jaramillo, Chicago Commons Employment and Training Center, Chicago Since starting classes at Chicago Commons, Elisa has learned to read, write, speak and understand English. She can communicate with her daughter's teacher, ask the doctor questions and better communicate with her oldest daughter. Elisa volunteers two hours per week at the Head Start program where Maribel attends and has gained valuable childcare provider skills. She also volunteered 2-3 afternoons for two weeks in the infant room at Chicago Commons. Elisa performed her duties extremely well and communicated only in English. She reads books to

her daughters and takes them to the library several times a week. Veronica is in elementary school doing very well and also learning to read. The family is learning how to use the computer they won in a contest after reading over 200 books together.

Michelle Jefferson, Westside Employment Education Center, Chicago Michelle began classes at Westside Employment Education Center to obtain her GED. She is now able to read better to her children and help her older daughter with her school work. Michelle's studious example not only motivates her children but also her younger sister whom she now tutors and who is more determined than ever to complete her high school education. Because of childcare needs, Michelle must take two buses and one train to get to class in the evening and walk home through dangerous neighborhoods. She also has a health condition that sometimes keeps her from class. Despite all that is working against her, Michelle perseveres. Her long term goal is to become a nurse so she can help other people.

Melzina and Travon Johnson, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning/Family Learning Project, Chicago Melzina and Travon attend the Blue Gargoyle Family Learning Project. Melzina attends seminars in parenting skills as well as reading/writing, math and computer classes. Spare time is spent in the nursery reading to the pre-schoolers, singing and doing craft projects together. Because her daughter is deaf, Melzina lobbied her alderman and received a street sign to warn drivers that a deaf child lives there. Melzina's reading has greatly improved and she made a promise to herself that she will always keep reading. "Reading is knowledge and it never ends." Both students are doing great.

Yolanda Sanchez and Jose Reyes, Chicago Commons Employment and Training Center, Chicago Yolanda and Jose have both made tremendous progress since they started with Chicago Commons Employment and Training Center. Yolanda has learned to speak, read and write in English. She can go to the doctor, take public transportation, and understand prescriptions without help from her husband. Knowing the

English language has helped her get a job where she had been volunteering. She has read over 800 books to her son. The library is their second home. The impact on Jose has been tremendous. He speaks both English and Spanish now which enables him to interact very well with other children. Yolanda also won a computer last year for reading over 300 books to Jose. In fact, Jose won't go to sleep at night without having a book read to him.

Hong Tran, Robinson Public Library, Robinson Hong came to America from Cambodia primarily speaking Chinese. Since signing up for instruction at Robinson Public Library, he was able to pass the written driver's test in English. Learning the "American" way is important to Hong and he is now able to have his own apartment, do his own shopping and can understand co-workers and customers better. In spite of his busy six day work week, he finds time to learn a new language which is just one hurdle for a newcomer. Hong visits the Robinson Public Library often to check out books or movies to help with learning English and life in America. Hong's tutor, Michele Nash, is also a Spotlight on Service winner. Congratulations to both of you!

Irene Tyler, Urbana Adult Education Center, Urbana Irene has 10 children, 30 grandchildren and 43 great grandchildren. Just a few years ago, Irene decided to attend classes at Urbana Adult Education Center. Her goal was to get her high school diploma since she had to quit school at a young age and go to work. In addition to her classes, she participates in a family literacy evening program and brings three of her great grandchildren with her. Irene's attitude toward learning and people are excellent role models for her extensive family and those attending class with her. No matter how challenging a goal may be she never ceases trying. Irene is looking forward to obtaining a better job now that she will have her high school diploma. Irene proves again that it is never too late to strive to reach one's personal goals and that education is a lifelong endeavor.

**FY2000 SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE WINNERS
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Jane Carey, Oakton Community College, Skokie
After attending a workshop on tutoring, Jane observed classes to see which level she would like to work with. While at the beginning level class, the placement aid brought in eight new students who couldn't answer the question "What is your name?" The teacher asked if she would take these eight students somewhere and work with them. From then on she was hooked. Jane continued with these eight students but has had many more since then. What a thrill for her to see people from six or seven countries, of all ages and colors, working and laughing together and being eager to learn about each other's country. The similarities are far greater than the differences.

Peg Fletcher, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake
Peg has taught math for 33 years at the grade school as well as high school level. After reading a bulletin from McHenry County College asking for math tutors, she volunteered. Math is one of the components of the GED and disliked by many students. Peg has a gift that makes math understandable to students at all levels. After a few sessions with Peg, many students were able to pass the math course and earn their GED. One of her success stories is helping a young man with math who was going to quit the program because he felt he couldn't pass the math test. After working with him for a couple of months, he took the math test and passed it. He passed all the requirements and received his diploma. Then he went on and took college classes. Now he is an aide to a state representative.

Shalini Gupta, Indo-American Center, Chicago
Teaching English as a second language at Indo-American Center gives Shalini the opportunity to combine her desire to continue teaching English with her goal of giving back to the East Asian community. Her students range in age from early 20's to late 60's. She helps her students become more self-sufficient and feel more at home in this country. By learning to read English, they can pick up the paper and learn more about current events. By learning to write, they can fill out their medical history form at the doctor's office. By learning to speak English, they can converse with their grandchildren, answer the phone or go to the grocery store on their own. Shalini finds it truly

gratifying to know she is a part of their learning.

Kathleen Harrold, Oakton Community College, Skokie Kathleen helps students from all cultures learn English and their stories give her a window to the world. Kathleen has tutored all levels of students from the beginning to the advanced. She develops lessons to meet her students' individual needs. She finds information her students need on her own time, gives them strategies for solving their own problems and does an exceptional job preparing students for job interviews and subsequent employment. She acquaints her students with American customs and culture. Kathleen also serves as a mentor to new tutors by offering them insights on materials, instructional strategies and learning styles. New tutors feel more comfortable in class and are more self-assured about their ability to make a contribution after talking to Kathleen.

Barbara Lawyer, Spoon River College, Macomb Barbara enjoys helping students of all ages and backgrounds. She works with students in English as a second language classes, who have a developmental disability or those working on their GED. Barbara feels that all of her students are capable of success. One of her students was blind and wanted to take GED classes. Barbara read GED books to the student as she taped them. She also took GED books home to put them on tape for her student. After a few months, the student took the GED and not only passed but also achieved the highest score. In addition to volunteering as a tutor, Barbara is a Literacy Council member and always willing to help at area fundraisers and festivals.

Jim Lock, Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville After retiring from the federal government, Jim wanted something interesting and worthwhile to do so he volunteered as a tutor. Jim understands the isolation a student feels when they come to the United States unable to speak or write the language. In his job, Jim traveled to countries where he did not know the language or culture. The rewards are many as a tutor. Jim has seen the pride and joy on a GED graduate's face; a student improve in reading to the point of reading for pleasure; another student who felt she couldn't

learn math quickly proceed so fast he could barely stay ahead of her. Jim also helps with Tutor Training sessions where his enthusiasm for tutoring comes through and encourages prospective tutors.

Teta Minuzzo, Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan Besides being involved with the literacy program in Lake County since 1983, she has most recently become a volunteer tutor to share her love of reading and skills as a teacher. The students take the first step to enter the program and she is committed to helping them succeed and become confident in their abilities to learn. One of the most rewarding experiences for her was to see a young man share his love for his new bride by reading a poem at their wedding ceremony. This was after being in the program for just six months. To have the support of family and friends means so much to adult learners. Now this student has a new baby daughter which makes learning to read and write better an even more important goal. It is inspiring to see students face their many challenges and keep coming back, day after day, ready and willing to continue their efforts to become better readers.

Michele Nash, Robinson Public Library, Robinson Newly retired, Michele signed up when the local literacy program advertised training sessions for volunteers. Michele was matched with Hong Tran who came to this country as an adult and spoke Chinese and French. Michele knew French and they found a common ground. Hong's primary goal was to obtain a drivers license. Michele selected lessons that would reduce the language barrier while simultaneously build on Hong's goal. After getting his drivers license, Michele helped Hong with his other needs by accompanying him to doctors' offices, banks, stores, restaurants, etc. In essence, these were one-on-one field trips. Michele's most prized piece of mail was a postcard that Hong mailed her from Vietnam. He wrote in proper English, spelling all the words correctly.

Wolfgang Roth, Evanston Township High School, Evanston As a retiree who as spent periods of his professional life in Asia and Europe, the time he volunteers allows him to re-live good memories.

Wolfgang understands the needs of the students who attend classes since English was his second language, too. He relates well to students whether they are from Thailand and worked on a rice paddy or a Chinese chemical engineer who profoundly misses her child who is still in China. Wolfgang helps his students understand and appreciate both the language we speak and the lives we live. Even when his class load is high, he willingly takes on a new student. He wants to give them all a chance to speak the language they are trying so hard to master.

Karin Sconzert, Blue Gargoyle Adult Tutoring Program, Chicago As a former middle school teacher, teaching adults as a volunteer tutor seemed like a perfect fit for her. Her current student never went to school and never learned to read as a child. Once he retired, he took on the challenge of returning to school to learn to read and write. He wants to be able to read to his grandchildren. Karin works with him to help him reach his goals and is inspired by his determination and spirit. She has come to understand what people mean when they say that you get more than you give when you volunteer.