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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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White Announces Nine New Project Next Generation Sites

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White today announced that nine new sites will serve as hosts for the third year of Project Next Generation, White's statewide mentoring program for young people.

White identified the new sites as:

- Aurora Public Library
- Beardstown Public Library
- Carbondale Public Library
- Centralia Regional Library District
- Des Plaines Public Library
- East Moline Public Library
- Loves Park North Suburban Public Library District
- North Chicago Public Library
- Peoria Public Library

White said the nine new sites will join continuing first and second year Project Next Generation programs operating at public libraries in Bethany, Bloomington, Chicago (two sites), Elmwood Park, Quincy, Bensenville, Cahokia, Champaign, Danville, Dixon, Effingham, Harrisburg, Macomb and Mt. Vernon.

"I am thrilled to welcome these nine new sites into the growing Project Next Generation family," White said. "When I ran for Secretary of State three years ago, I promised to create an innovative mentoring program that would provide positive new learning opportunities for young people. Project Next Generation is the realization of that pledge.

"During the first two years of the program I have had the

pleasure of visiting almost all of our sites, and those visits were among the best days I've had as Secretary of State. Project Next Generation is doing what I had hoped it would do. Kids are having fun and developing technological skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives. Caring adult mentors are providing guidance and serving as positive role models for participants. And our public libraries are proving to be the perfect environment for such interaction to take place.

"I have worked closely with kids for more than 40 years, and during that time I've learned that kids need mentors. They need older kids and adults to offer them encouragement and guidance and to pass along valuable lessons about life. Project Next Generation is helping to teach participants how to be good, productive citizens."

Project Next Generation is a program for sixth through ninth graders. Qualified mentors teach students how to use state of the art computers, the Internet, modems, scanners, and digital cameras, all of which are provided through a grant offered by the Secretary of State's office. At each site, the number of students is limited to between 10 and 12 to maintain an optimum ratio of one mentor per three or four students. Though a statewide curriculum has been developed to maintain program consistency, individual sites are given flexibility to evolve based on student needs.