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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White and the Illinois Press Association Honor Spotlight Literacy Award Winners

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and Illinois Press Association Executive Director David Bennett today handed out Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service awards, recognizing outstanding progress made by literacy students or families and honoring volunteer tutors for their commitment to literacy.

During ceremonies in Springfield, Spotlight on Achievement awards recognizing outstanding progress made by literacy students or families were given to:

- Denise Brown, a student at the Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program in Chicago.
- Cornell Collins, who attends a program offered by Oakton Community College in Skokie.
- Celia Cruz, a student in the English as a Second Language program with the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago.
- John and James Jackson, father and son students in the Family Literacy Program at the Common Place Family Learning Center, Peoria.
- James Phillips, who attends classes at Westside Employment Education Center in Chicago.
- Maria Pintor, a student in ESL and GED programs at Rock Valley College in Rockford.
- Lorenzia Tucker, who attends a program offered by Chicago Commons.
- James Webber, another student at the Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program in Chicago.
- Sanbonita West, a teenaged student at Tolton Center in Chicago who recently passed the GED test.
- Ralph Zacharias, who attends adult education classes at Spoon River College, Macomb Campus.

Spotlight on Achievement winners received a \$100 check from the IPA Foundation, a plaque, a six-month subscription to their local newspaper and a personalized copy of the Illinois Blue Book.

Spotlight on Service awards recognizing outstanding tutors of literacy students were given to:

- Nancy Dorsey, Read to Learn for a Brighter Future, District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights.
- Camilla Fano, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago.
- Dorothy Hawn, Kaskaskia College, Centralia.
- Wylida Huffman, Rock Valley College Adult Education, Rockford.
- Victor Martinez, Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition, Chicago.
- Helen Motulsky, Danville Area Community College.
- Nancy Myer, Waubensee Community College, Aurora.
- Mary Jane Vetter, Richland Community College, Decatur.
- James Wheeler, Common Place Family Learning Center, Peoria.
- Carrol Williams, Spoon River College, Canton.

Spotlight on Service award winners received a plaque and personalized Blue Book, a six-month newspaper subscription, and \$100 will be donated by the IPA Foundation in the recipient's name to the literacy program for which they volunteer.

"I am so proud of these remarkable students for their incredible courage and persistence, and for overcoming many formidable obstacles to achieve personal and professional success," said Secretary White. "Their hard work, determination and commitment to excellence are a shining example to everyone. The reading, writing, math and language skills our students have obtained through our Illinois literacy programs are allowing them to be better parents, better employees, and more active, productive citizens in their communities.

"I also salute our award-winning tutors for their tremendous generosity and selflessness. They remind us that we all should devote time and effort to improving the lives of others. We can make our communities and our state better if we each try to make a positive impact in someone's life. More than 15,000 volunteer tutors provided basic reading, writing, math and language skills to almost 36,000 adult students a year ago. Our volunteers contributed more than 1.6 million hours of service to literacy students. Both our students and our volunteer tutors deserve our praise and admiration for their exemplary efforts."

"The Illinois Press Association is proud to join the Secretary of State each year in co-sponsoring these prestigious awards that recognize and honor outstanding literacy students and volunteer tutors," said Bennett. "The IPA and its member newspapers are committed to addressing literacy needs so that every citizen has the skills necessary to meet their personal and professional goals."

In determining Spotlight award winners, the Secretary of State's Library and Literacy Office mailed award nomination forms to literacy programs registered with the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline. The Illinois Press Association reviewed the nominations and recommended ten students and ten tutors for the awards.

SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVEMENT WINNERS MAY 17, 2002

Denise Brown, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago

Denise came to Blue Gargoyle at age 16, never having gone to any kind of school. She and four siblings watched animal shows on television to try to get some education. Since starting classes at Blue Gargoyle, her life has changed greatly. She can read a book, read street signs and read her Bible. She has more confidence in herself and is much happier. She has excellent attendance in computer, Job Readiness and math classes. In addition, she works regularly with two different tutors. Her determination is inspiring to her tutors. Two sisters have also followed in her footsteps and she's helping her brother learn to read. Her goal is to be a nurse and work in a hospital.

Cornell Collins, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Cornell began attending class at Oakton Community College in the fall of 2000. He knew he couldn't read well and it was interfering with his job. So he asked for help. Now, he can read books for pleasure and read difficult reports for work. Since improving his reading skills, Cornell is more confident on the job and more assertive when he speaks on the phone. He recently received a job promotion and a raise and was offered a very important position in another city. Cornell makes every effort to attend class, even though he may be exhausted from his heavy work schedule. He is always willing to work 150%. Cornell is a hero to his tutor because heroes act when they are afraid. Cornell did that. He got up the nerve to ask for help despite no encouragement from his friends and family. One day, Cornell wants to get a GED and go to college and he will do it. He is proof that the human spirit is stronger than any challenges that may come our way.

Celia Cruz, Infant Welfare Society, Chicago

Celia began to attend the English as a Second Language (ESL) program three years ago and has used it to gain back her independence. Celia felt like a prisoner in her own home because she was unable to speak English. Going to the bank and the grocery store were major ordeals. Celia needed to find an ESL program that included childcare since she has three children. The Family Literacy Program was the answer for Celia and her four-year-old daughter. As Celia has learned English her confidence and self-esteem have increased and she has come out of her shell. Learning English helped her communicate better with her family's

doctor when her family endured major health problems during the last three years. Both Celia and her daughter have benefited from the literacy program. Celia takes her family to the library every week and knows where the Chicago museums are located. She helps her children with their homework. Due to her hard work as an ESL student, Celia has been granted a scholarship to a community college to continue her studies in advanced English and Child Development.

John and James Jackson, Common Place, Peoria

John went back to school at age 53, taking his three-year-old son James along to the Family Literacy program at Common Place. As a recovering alcoholic, John wanted to learn to read the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) materials. John has since learned to read his first chapter book, is learning to write, and now leads a regular AA meeting. James, his son, is a happy, well-adjusted first grader. They have grown closer because of time spent together in Parent and Child Together activities, reading books and attending weekly book discussions at the library. In spite of the fact that both have health problems, attendance is a high priority for them. Their family life and their self-esteem have improved as a result of John's achieving his personal goal of learning to read. John is an inspiration to all of the staff, to the other families and to his tutor.

James Phillips, Westside Employment Education Center, Chicago

Learning to read has not only changed James' life, it has given him a life. James was introduced to Westside by his probation officer at the age of sixteen. James had never attended school and had never been outside of his neighborhood. James is learning to read, to write, to do math and to use technology. His self-confidence grows daily. James gets to school early and stays until the Center closes. Not only does this help him in his studies, it helps him avoid the drug and gang settings of his high crime neighborhood. He is determined to learn and he hopes to get his GED so he can take care of his Mother, brothers and sisters. James takes new students under his wing and makes them feel welcome. He also has a mentor that takes him to places in the city of Chicago that he had never seen. He is grateful to the people at Westside who have helped him turn his life around and get back on track.

Maria Pintor, Rock Valley College, Rockford

Maria came to the United States from Mexico in 1985 with no knowledge of English, no job and no specific job skills. Maria worked in the fields picking fruit and vegetables so she could support herself. Eventually she landed a job as a packer on the assembly line at a factory. Because Maria knew that education was the key to bettering herself at work, she started attending ESL and GED classes at Rock Valley two years ago. This in turn helped her to get a promotion to her present job as Quality Auditor. Maria is very persistent in spite of the many challenges she faces with her health problems, with balancing family obligations with the

demands of full-time employment, with learning English as her second language and with making long commutes to work and class. She is determined to take the GED in English even though she could take the Spanish GED. Her life has improved dramatically since her arrival in 1985.

Lorenzia Tucker, Chicago Commons ETC, Chicago

Since entering Chicago Commons program nine months ago, Lorenzia has turned her life around. She was an unemployed mother of two on welfare, now she is a scholarly, articulate, and critically literate parent who is passing down these skills to her children. She made a choice to improve her life. Her reading and writing skills have improved dramatically. She reads to her children nightly and uses the public library on a regular basis. Now that she is confident, she enjoys reading aloud. It makes her proud of her accomplishments when she sees her daughter getting books to read because she sees her mother reading. Lorenzia's hard work paid off last September when she passed the GED test. As a result, she applied for and earned a \$5,000 Workforce Investment Act grant which she is using a portion of to cover her Business Secretarial Training.

James Webber, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago

James was the oldest of his brothers and sisters. So he was the one who stayed home from school as a child, and went to work to help support the family. When he moved to Chicago, he went to work beginning as a boxcutter and then worked as a butcher for 30 years. After raising his own family, he retired. Then he came to school to fulfill a lifelong dream. Now he can read the newspaper, his church bulletin and keep a checking account. He loves coming to school and his excellent attendance proves that. He also enjoys being able to read to his grandchildren. On top of all this, James is a gardener. Learning to read enabled him to read seed packets, place orders and make decisions about planting and garden care. He and his neighbors turned a neighborhood swamp into a flower garden that won first place in the Mayor's Landscape Contest for Region 5 every year for the past four years.

Sanbonita West, Tolton Center, Chicago

At age 17 Sanbonita has taken on many adult responsibilities. When she moved from Minnesota, her credits from school there didn't carry over to Chicago. Determined to get her GED and keep her grades high so she could get in to a good college, she began attending classes at Tolton Center. Her reading and math improved immensely after completing the first ten-week session. Soon afterward, she landed a job and began the difficult balance between work and school. Improving her reading level has given her the confidence to organize a Tolton student newspaper. She even enticed other students to join her in this literary endeavor. In spite of incidents of violence against her and her loved ones, she

continues to strive to achieve her dream of college and a career in journalism. Her growing capacity for serious responsibility and goal setting are inspirational. Sanbonita was notified earlier this month that she passed the GED and constitutional tests. Congratulations!

Ralph Zacharias, Spoon River College Adult Education/Macomb Campus

Going back to school at the age of 53 is not easy. Ralph was working the third shift at a factory, so he was exhausted when he came to class but he never gave up. Due to health reasons, he had to quit his job but he never stopped coming to class. Through hard work and determination, Ralph passed the GED in December 2000. Ralph was an excellent math student so he is always willing to help other students in math. He is now taking a computer class to help him get a part-time job. His achievements led Spoon River College to award him a scholarship for a college level course in astronomy. His determination and success are an inspiration to everyone he meets.

**SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE WINNERS
MAY 17, 2002**

Nancy Dorsey, Read to Learn for a Brighter Future, District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights

Ten years ago, Nancy heard about the Read to Learn program through a newspaper article. Although she taught math, she feels that reading is the most important skill a person can have. She wanted to share her love of reading with others who were being deprived of that enjoyment. Nancy's student (since 1993) was a woman from rural Korea with no formal education who is now reading English. After this student's husband changed jobs, the student continues to drive 30 miles to be tutored by Nancy. Nancy spends time with her students outside the classroom to develop relationships with them. Students like her so much that they work hard not to let her down. Nancy not only tutors two different literacy classes at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library but also tutors women at an abused women's shelter. Nancy enjoys tutoring because of her love of people. And she gains great satisfaction from seeing her students' progress.

Camilla Fano, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago

Camilla and her husband landed in New York in 1939 to escape fascist Italy. They knew very little English and had few resources but, with help from others, they found jobs. They both wanted to help others because of the help they received. Retiring after 40 years of teaching, Camilla began volunteering. This experience has enriched her life enormously. When one of her pupils does well, it is a personal joy to Camilla. In 1985, Camilla and another volunteer organized a math program to help students count money. The math program has grown so that now Camilla

and two other volunteers help the math teachers. The workbook used is the same one Camilla found and ordered back in 1985. Camilla believes strongly in education and wants to give whatever she can to the literacy program at Blue Gargoyle.

Dorothy Hawn, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Dorothy volunteers as a tutor because she wants to use her passion for reading to help others make the world a better place. Dorothy has been volunteering for over 10 years. She gets great satisfaction when she sees a student realize how much they can learn. From there, they blossom in the realization that reading is enjoyable and a door to knowledge of their world. One man she taught passed the tests for a Commercial Driver's License with flying colors after less than a year's reading instruction. A female student who had been hampered by low self-esteem gained so much confidence she was interviewed by the local radio station. Dorothy firmly believes we are here to help each other and her knowledge of the English language is the way she helps those less fortunate than she is.

Wylda Huffman, Rock Valley College Adult Education, Rockford

Wylda believes that the retirement years should be productive so she works part-time as a nurse in a nursing home, tutors at Rock Valley College Adult Education and stays active in other community programs. Wylda speaks Spanish so she is able to assist other teachers when they need to help Spanish-speaking students. One of her greatest joys was discovering that a former student works at the same nursing home as she does as a Certified Nursing Assistant. Wylda had tutored this single mother of six in GED classes at Rock Valley. For her, the pleasure of helping someone to make a positive change in life, makes it all worthwhile.

Victor Martinez, Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition, Chicago

Since Victor was a child, he always wanted to be a teacher. When he came to the United States, he used his education to help other people who came here. He volunteers as a literacy tutor to help others improve their lives. For him, the greatest reward is to see the happy faces of students when they are learning. One of Victor's students was from the Honduras and wanted to learn English. However, since the student had never gone to school, he didn't know how to read and write in his own language. Victor started working with him and he advanced quickly because his intelligence was amazing. Being able to help people gives Victor great satisfaction. He believes that education is the way to make a difference.

Helen Motulsky, Danville Area Community College

Helen is one of the original tutors at Danville Area Community College's

The Reader's Route program. Helen taught English for several years. When the literacy program was started, she applied as a volunteer tutor. When a student exhibits success in reading or brings a book about one of his or her interests, she is very proud of that progress. She worked with a student several years who refused to write for Helen. She gave him a monthly calendar and encouraged him to write one word every day. A year later she bought him a weekly planner so he could write a sentence each day about what he did. Now he has a daily planner to start writing paragraphs. It worked! On a trip East, Helen observed that a man was reading from business size cards on a loose leaf ring. She asked him what he was doing and he said he was learning a foreign language. When she got back to Danville, she suggested they have small cards on a loose-leaf ring to help students remember their sight words. Her language skills make her a valuable tutor for students. Volunteering as a literacy tutor fills her life.

Nancy Myer, Waubensee Community College, Aurora

Nancy volunteers as a literacy tutor to repay the countless people who have helped her through life. Within the last two years, she became aware of the need for English as a Second Language volunteers and teachers. She has a strong interest in other cultures so tutoring adults from other nations appealed to her. She began tutoring a student from Jamaica who attended school for nine years off and on but had never learned to read. She searches for materials to help her develop an appropriate curriculum for this student. Going the extra mile seems to be the norm for Nancy. She not only organizes her lessons but also makes a weekly plan for the other tutors that come in the rest of the week for this student. Nancy makes learning fun and she can't believe how great this "work" makes her feel.

Mary Jane Vetter, Richland Community College, Decatur

Mary Jane has volunteered as a tutor since her retirement. She is amazingly patient and continues to explain lessons until students grasp the concepts. She has worked with the same two students at Project Read for over three years on basic math and reading skills and has enjoyed watching their progress. Her students have the best attendance of anyone in the program. She provides support outside of the classroom through telephone calls and will even call students to make sure they wake up in time for class. She brings treats in for special occasions plus provides her own transportation all on a fixed income. Mary Jane believes it is a fair exchange between tutor and student. They learn from each other.

James Wheeler, Common Place, Peoria

Jim's spiritual study group challenged each member of the group to find the most effective way to apply the teachings of Christ in their daily lives. Jim received a flyer in the mail asking for volunteer tutors and he has

been at Common Place for the last eight years. Jim started out teaching a computer class, then tutored reading one-on-one. Now he teaches a math class to a small group of students working at different levels. And he manages to keep everyone motivated. His flexibility, creativity and understanding all contribute to his ability to find a way to teach everyone. Jim knows that learning goes both ways. He feels he has learned something from each student who has passed through his class.

Carrol Williams, Spoon River College, Canton

After many years of retirement, Carrol wanted to do something constructive. He read an article in the local newspaper concerning the literacy program at Spoon River and signed up for the training. It turned out to be one of the best decisions he ever made. Adult learners have many reasons why they want to learn to read. Their reasons vary from wanting to be able to read to their children, to read the Bible or to move up in the workplace. Carrol has worked with all levels of students including some who began at very low-levels of reading. Carrol shows that he enjoys working with students by going the extra mile in all he does for the literacy program. He feels rewarded when he has helped the learners take a step towards reaching their own personal goals.