



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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SECRETARY OF STATE JESSE WHITE AND ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION HONOR OUTSTANDING LITERACY STUDENTS AND TUTORS

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Press Association today announced the winners of the annual Spotlight on Achievement awards recognizing outstanding accomplishments by literacy students and Spotlight on Service awards honoring outstanding contributions made by volunteer tutors.

Secretary White and David Bennett, IPA Executive Director, handed out the awards during ceremonies held in Springfield as part of the annual Illinois Family Literacy Conference sponsored by the Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center.

Spotlight on Achievement awards recognizing outstanding accomplishments made by literacy students were given to:

- Emma Michelle Bowens, a student at Blue Gargoyle Youth Service Center in **Chicago**.
- Maria Gamboa, Oakton Community College, **Skokie**.
- Beverly Mitchell, Chicago Commons Employment Training Center, **Chicago**.
- David Peek, Kaskaskia College, **Centralia**.
- Carla Pierce, Urbana Adult Education Even Start, **Urbana**.
- James Rogers, Albany Park Community Center, **Chicago**.
- Orville "Skip" Skibbe, Oakton Community College, **Skokie**.
- Willie Thatch, Jr., Olive-Harvey College South Chicago Campus, **Chicago**.
- Tina Thomas, Kankakee Community College, **Kankakee**.
- Karlyon Turner, The Literacy Council, **Rockford**.

Spotlight on Achievement winners received \$200 from the IPA Foundation, a plaque, a personalized Illinois Blue Book, a bag of donated books and a 6-month newspaper subscription, compliments of the winner's local daily newspaper.

"I am proud to recognize these award-winning students for their courage, hard work and determination," said Secretary White. "They have recognized that having reading, writing, math and language skills is critical to their personal and professional growth. We are hopeful that their efforts will set them on the path to greater success."

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

- Genevieve Arnold, Kankakee Community College, **Kankakee.**
- Georgia Borah, Frontier Community College, **Fairfield.**
- George Dell, Waubensee Community College, **Aurora.**
- Delores Hall, The Literacy Council, **Rockford.**
- Dick Hilmers, Prairie State College, **Chicago Heights.**
- Irene Rohan, Oakton Community College, **Skokie.**
- Dale Ryan, Common Place, **Peoria.**
- Cass Stevenson, Kaskaskia College, **Centralia.**
- Paula Whitlege, Literacy Volunteers of America/Project U.P.W.A.R.D., **Peoria.**
- Barbara Williams, Rend Lake College, **Ina.**

Spotlight on Service award winners received \$200 from the IPA Foundation for the literacy program they volunteer at, a plaque, personalized Illinois Blue Book and 6-month newspaper subscription compliments of the winner's local daily newspaper.

"I want to commend our award-winning tutors for their generosity," White said. "Our literacy volunteer tutors are a great example to all of us that we should devote time and effort to making a positive impact in our communities. This year we have the unique opportunity of awarding a Spotlight on Achievement Award and a Spotlight on Service Award to three teams of students and tutors who work together. I think this occurrence shows how powerful and effective the volunteer tutor – student relationship can be."

White said 34,860 adult students were served by Secretary of State Adult Volunteer Literacy tutoring projects during FY04, and 14,172 individuals volunteered to tutor in nearly 200 local literacy programs. Volunteer tutors provided more than 1.6 million hours of service. In determining Spotlight award winners, the Illinois State Library Literacy Office mailed award nomination forms to literacy programs registered with the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline (1-800-321-9511). The Illinois Press Association reviewed the nominations and recommended ten students and ten tutors for the awards.

"The Illinois Press Association and our Foundation are honored to join Secretary White in co-sponsoring this celebration every year to provide well earned recognition to these outstanding literacy students and volunteer tutors," said Bennett. "The IPA is the largest state press organization in the country, with more than 600 member newspapers who are committed to addressing literacy needs in our state. We hope students who have participated in local literacy programs to enhance their reading skills will make newspapers a part of their lives and use newspapers as part of their personal and professional development."

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2005 SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVEMENT PROFILES

Emma Michelle Bowens, Blue Gargoyle Youth Service Center, Chicago

As a teenager in the fall of 2001, Emma began reading and math classes at Blue Gargoyle. She has now progressed to GED classes. As she matured her attitude changed. She became committed to learning and became a joy to be around. Her relationship has improved with her brothers and sisters. As a role model to them, Emma has inspired them to go back to school to improve their lives. Emma is looking forward to going to college and to succeeding in life.

Maria Gamboa, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Coming to the United States from Mexico as a teenager, Maria helped her mother with her four siblings. That didn't leave her much time to learn English. When Maria married and started her own family, schooling once again was not at the forefront of her life. She lacked a formal education in both Mexico and the United States. Maria and her family spoke Spanish in their home, so learning English has been a challenge. In addition, Maria's has a hearing problem that complicated and lengthened the learning process. But Maria is persevering and learning English. She currently works and is able to assist customers at a department store. Each day that passes, she feels more comfortable at her job and with her English. Maria's tutor, Irene Rohan, is also here today as a Spotlight on Service winner.

Beverly Mitchell, Chicago Commons Employment Training Center, Chicago

Beverly has overcome an abusive relationship and moved on with her life. As a mother of four, she is now so committed to learning that she is working towards her GED. When her children see her reading and doing homework, they are encouraged to learn. In fact, her nine-year old daughter's grades have improved. Her younger children are also reading and love to have Mom read to them. The family enjoys going to the library every month and picking out books. As a member of the Reading is Fundamental committee at her children's daycare center, Beverly helps pick out books for the children. She is also president of the Adult Learner Leadership Council at Chicago Commons.

David Peek, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

David's life has changed since he began working with tutors from Kaskaskia College's "The Reading Link." Even when he was ill and off work, he continued to work with his tutor and used the time productively to study and learn. In addition to his regular tutor David has even come to college in the evenings to work with a math tutor. He does tasks enthusiastically and with total dedication. David has gone from reading short stories to reading John Grisham's books. He is currently working towards the GED. Once he completes the GED test, David wants to continue taking courses at Kaskaskia College and study design.

Carla Pierce, Urbana Adult Education Even Start, Urbana

Carla has been through a lot in her young life. She has three children and lived with her mother until her mother passed away in 2002. Her mother's death left her and the children devastated. About a year later, they lost their apartment due to a fire and had to move in with relatives. Eventually, Carla moved to a women's shelter and entered the program at Urbana Adult Education Even Start. She recently obtained her GED. Carla is doing this for her kids and in memory of her mother who wanted her to go back to school before she died. She has worked hard this past semester to improve her writing and reading and overcome her fear of math. Carla is a role model for the other mothers in the program. Her interaction with her children and other Even Start students definitely shows Carla as a mature, goal-setting and caring parent. She has come a long way and is determined to succeed.

James Rogers, Albany Park Community Center, Chicago

A shy man, James is unable to be here today, but Kathleen Reynolds from Albany Park Community Center is here to accept his award. James comes from a family of non-readers and did not have anyone in his life to encourage his learning. For years, he worked odd jobs and was sometimes homeless because he couldn't complete employment applications. Since starting classes at Albany Park Community Center, James' life has changed in amazing ways. His reading level has jumped and he was able to obtain full-time employment and move into an apartment on his own for the first time. James is an inventor and has obtained patent rights for an invention. He is currently working to finance a prototype of his invention. James is also working towards getting custody of his son and for the first time sees a bright future for himself.

Orville "Skip" Skibbe, Oakton Community College, Skokie

At 78, Skip is fulfilling a lifelong dream to learn to read. Skip has a family, was in the military and worked all of his life. He avoided issues requiring the ability to read and was fearful that others would detect his lack of reading ability. His son told him about literacy classes that were available at a local library through Oakton Community College. Now Skip is able to read street signs, notices at the library, signs in store windows or labels at the grocery store that other people take for granted. Recently, Skip was able to read a book to his granddaughter. Skip is working hard to achieve his goal of learning to read.

Willie Thatch, Jr., Olive-Harvey College South Chicago Campus, Chicago

Willie has truly taken responsibility for his own learning. He thirsts for and takes advantage of any opportunity that will further his literacy skills. He seeks extra lessons and extra tutoring whenever and wherever possible. Willie can now help his young nephew with homework. Willie is able to read labels at the grocery store, send cards or letters, read the Bible, read street signs and flyers. Once he only saw letters; now Willie can read words.

Tina Thomas, Kankakee Community College, Kankakee

Tina wanted to be able to help her children with their homework and read to them, so she contacted Kankakee Community College for help. Shortly after that, she began working with a tutor. Tina was a faithful student, walking to the local library twice a week to meet with her tutor regardless of the weather. Her reading, writing and math skills have improved and enabled her to feel good about being a single parent. She can now fill out a job application and is looking

forward to getting a good job in the future. She has become a role model for her children, family and members of her community. Tina's tutor, Genevieve Arnold, is also here today as a Spotlight on Service winner.

Karlyon Turner, The Literacy Council, Rockford

Karlyon's life has changed tremendously in the three years since she began working with a tutor at The Literacy Council. She is working full time at a hospital (and getting benefits), she is studying for the GED and she is buying a Habitat for Humanity home. As a new homeowner, she is learning life skills such as budgeting her money and she is no longer on welfare. All of this was brought about by her gains in basic skills. Reading is not easy for her since she is slightly dyslexic. Karlyon works hard and has achieved so much. Her tutor, Delores Hall, is also here as a Spotlight on Service winner.

2005 SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE PROFILES

Genevieve Arnold, Kankakee Community College, Kankakee

Genevieve has tutored several students since joining Kankakee Community College's ALIVE Adult Literacy Program eight years ago. Tina Thomas, one of her students, is also one of this year's Spotlight on Achievement winners. Genevieve has helped Tina reach many of her goals. Tina's reading, writing and math skills have improved greatly since they began working together two years ago. While the tutoring lessons serve as the foundation for this learning experience, Genevieve and Tina have moved beyond the usual tutor/student relationship. Tina has become involved with the church that Genevieve and her husband attend. They attend events together that Tina and her family would never have had the opportunity to be a part of if not for the support of Genevieve.

Georgia Borah, Frontier Community College, Fairfield

Georgia has volunteered for the Literacy Development Center at Frontier Community College since its inception in 1985. Georgia is a retired schoolteacher and is eager to tutor whenever she is called upon for assistance. She strongly believes it would be wrong to live and not help others. Georgia incorporates many survival and daily living elements in her lessons, and has been known to use personal funds to provide food, transportation and school supplies to students who need them. She was instrumental in helping develop the first pre-GED classes offered at Frontier Community College. Georgia had a student from India who was so eager to learn that she wanted to come to class every day. Other students have been able to get jobs. For Georgia, there is no such thing as retirement when there is a need to fill. She loves helping others.

George Dell, Waubensee Community College, Aurora

George has been a volunteer tutor with Waubensee Community College adult literacy program for 15 years. He enjoys working with people and making a difference in their lives. George is currently working with students to help them pass the GED. He has helped students realize that writing and math are not so difficult, and that those subjects can be learned. George once helped another student learn more about science. While the student had the ability to understand the material, she lacked the confidence to go forward with her understanding. By working with her in physics, George helped her to master science so she could go on to get her GED. When he saw this student a few months later, she was enrolled in a nursing program. All in all, becoming a literacy volunteer has been one of the most rewarding experiences in his life.

Delores Hall, The Literacy Council, Rockford

After retiring in 1994 from the Circuit Clerk's office, Delores started tutoring at The Literacy Council. She had witnessed the need for adult literacy instruction during her working years when people would sign their Bond Form with an "X". Her current student, Karlyon Turner, is a Spotlight on Achievement winner this year, and has made remarkable changes in her life. In the beginning, her student's gains were small, but she persisted and has met many of her goals. Delores was there each step of the way, helping Karlyon achieve her goals. She has a better job with benefits, and she is studying for the GED. When Karlyon was accepted into the Habitat for

Humanity program, Delores and her husband became her mentors. This required hours of work at the construction site working on walls, moving rocks and helping with pages of paperwork. The smile on Delores' face when her student received the keys to her new home told the whole story. They achieved this together, and Delores couldn't have been more proud.

Dick Hilmers, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights

Upon retirement in 1985, Dick began volunteering to record books on tape for the visually impaired because he wanted them to enjoy books as much as he did. In 1986, Dick was trained as a volunteer tutor. He has taught more than 900 math students in the past 19 years, either one-on-one or in small groups, and is known as the "math tutor specialist". Words can't quite describe what these many years of tutoring math have meant to Dick. "There is a challenge and satisfaction in helping young adults to prepare for the GED test because you know that when they pass they will have a much more promising future," he says. Dick appreciates the effort that students must put in. He sees so many that strive to pass the GED while coping with difficult and sometimes overwhelming personal circumstances.

Irene Rohan, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Irene began volunteering in Oakton's program more than ten years ago. She brought her expertise as a retired elementary school teacher and her knowledge of speech therapy to their program. Her most memorable, challenging and rewarding experience as a tutor has been the last few years working with Maria Gamboa, who is here as a Spotlight on Achievement winner. Maria is hearing-impaired, and her first language is Spanish. Working as a team, they have accomplished so much. Maria has become more familiar with the English language. This has enabled her to attain a position outside of the home. Irene firmly believes that her learner would have "fallen through the cracks" if she had not gotten into a program like Oakton's to provide her with the literacy basics. Volunteering as a tutor is very fulfilling for Irene and she appreciates the opportunity to do so.

Dale Ryan, Common Place, Peoria

Dale has volunteered for 23 years at Common Place helping people learn to read. Through the years it became clear to him how important reading skills are to help a person function in the everyday world. Things we take for granted are much harder when you are unable read. Dale had an unforgettable experience when he was an election judge and a former student came in and yelled to a room full of people, "That's the man that taught me to read!" His current student was a Spotlight on Achievement winner in 2003 after advancing three grade levels. Dale is a role model for adult learners. He instills his love of learning and exemplifies service to others. Dale wants to see that day when he no longer has a job as a tutor; he wants to see the day when everyone has basic reading skills. To this end, Dale also volunteers at a grade school, reading with first and second graders.

Cass Stevenson, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Cass worked for the Illinois Department of Public Aid/Department of Human Services for 25 years and dealt with many people who were unable to read and write well enough to complete simple forms. One of her early welfare clients thought he was "too dumb" to learn to read, and

he was embarrassed when his young children asked him to read a story to them and he couldn't. This was many years before The Reading Link program was implemented at Kaskaskia College. However, it is a story Cass never forgot and when she retired, she became a volunteer tutor with The Reading Link. She believes we should all do some volunteer work to help our fellow man. After helping her first learner pass the GED, Cass was hooked. Then she worked with a group of English as a Second Language learners. Cass found it exciting to see this group learn and make progress in their knowledge and pronunciation of the English language. The group grew so much that it eventually became a class with an instructor, although Cass continued as the tutor. Most learners have a thirst for knowledge and she enjoys working with them. Cass is known as the "yes" tutor at The Reading Link. She has a tireless devotion to the program and great concern for each learner.

Paula Whitlege, Literacy Volunteers of America/Project U.P.W.A.R.D., Peoria

In 1989, Paula had an "empty nest". Her children were grown and her grandchildren were in school. When she heard an advertisement for tutors on television, she responded. Paula has been a volunteer tutor at LVA/Project U.P.W.A.R.D. ever since. Paula's first student was 72 and read at the second grade level. The student's goal was to learn to read the Bible and she achieved that goal after working with Paula. Several of Paula's adult learners were mothers in early childhood programs. Paula would work hard to place mothers because she felt families as a whole needed to continue their education. Another student that stands out in Paula's memory was a woman who grew up on a plantation in Alabama. Paula always felt she learned as much from her as the student learned from Paula. At nearly every class this student would tell a story about her life growing up on the plantation. After taking a few months off for health reasons, Paula returned with just as much enthusiasm and patience. Reading has always been important to Paula and she's glad to have the opportunity to share that interest with others.

Barbara Williams, Rend Lake College, Ina

Barbara has been a volunteer tutor for the past 13 years at Rend Lake College, even though she has a demanding schedule as the owner and manager of the Main Street Inn. Barbara is a volunteer tutor at the Perry County Jail helping men improve their literacy skills and prepare for the GED test. By integrating comprehension, problem solving and critical thinking into the lesson plans, she influences and encourages the educational development of her students to successfully pass the test and take a positive step in life. One young Vietnamese man passed his GED test in a federal prison one day, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service arrived the next day. He may be deported, but his letter to Barbara said it doesn't matter because now he knows he can accomplish something and do it anywhere. All of her students have been very kind in expressing their gratitude in letters and often with copies of their successful tests. "It is a privilege to receive thanks for doing something you enjoy," she says. Barbara is proud that these men try so hard and is very happy when they succeed.