



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES FREEPORT, JOLIET, KANKAKEE, RICHTON PARK AND SPARTA LIBRARIES TO HOST NEW PROJECT NEXT GENERATION PROGRAMS

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced today that public libraries in Freeport, Joliet, Kankakee, Richton Park and Sparta have been selected to serve as new hosts for Project Next Generation, White's statewide mentoring program for young people.

"I am delighted to welcome these public libraries into the growing Project Next Generation family," White said. "With the addition of these new sites, which will begin operating this summer, we now have programs in twenty-five public libraries located throughout the state. Upon assuming the office of Secretary of State in 1999, I pledged to create an innovative new mentoring program that would provide positive new learning opportunities for young people. Project Next Generation is the realization of that goal."

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 Illinois State Library. 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.

"Project Next Generation is doing what I had hoped it would do," White said. "Students 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."

"The Sparta Public Library board and staff are thrilled to be a part of Secretary White's PNG program," said library director Cristy Stuepegia. "Our library set a goal of targeting programming for preteens and young adults in 2006. Secretary White has made this goal a reality by selecting our library to help train and mentor youths. Preteens and young adults face many pressures and challenges unlike any previous generations. We are fortunate that our library can be a part of their growth process and to empower them for the future."

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WHITE ANNOUNCES NEW PNG SITES/ADD 1

“At Freeport Library, our motto is ‘More Than Books on a Shelf’”, said director Carole Dickerson. “What a perfect fit with Project Next Generation! Far too often, children stop coming to the library when they stop attending preschool story times. Libraries have so much to offer older children, including access to technology. Project Next Generation will ensure not only access to up-to-date equipment, but will also provide, through a strong mentoring component, the one-on-one attention that can be so important to a child’s success.”

“The Joliet Public Library is thrilled to get a Project Next Generation grant,” said director James R. Johnston. “Helping to make the connection between at-risk kids and technology is an exciting opportunity for us, and one we've been hoping to provide for some time. PNG will connect the library, at-risk young adults and service back to the community, and could not have come at a better time for Joliet.”

"The library plans to incorporate PNG into a planned reorganization of one of our computer centers into a youth homework and technology center," said PNG project director Dianne Harmon. "We want to use young people to provide websites for various community organizations that currently do not have a web presence, such as our Joliet Alliance for Youth. This group brings together all types of organizations that provide services to at-risk youth, and has dramatically increased networking opportunities for members."

"Our staff is delighted to be selected as a Project Next Generation site," said Cynthia Fuerst, Kankakee Public Library director. “We are planning on working with our teens to develop a video pod cast showing our community through their eyes. Teens are perceptive, honest and have so many creative, interesting, and fresh ideas. We are eager to learn what they think is best about Kankakee. The process of developing, writing and editing will help to develop their technology and communication skills, and the finished product will be an accomplishment that they can share with people around the world."

“The Library Board and staff of the Richton Park Public Library District are grateful to have been selected to participate in reaching out to children through Project Next Generation,” said head librarian Patrick Nevins. “Our mission is to foster an environment that is responsive to the needs of our community, in particular to the educational and recreational needs of the children of Richton Park. Project Next Generation will allow the Library to continue to have a long lasting and positive impact on the lives of children that will nurture and sustain them throughout their lives.”

White said the new sites will join PNG programs currently operating at public libraries in Beardstown, Bensenville, Bloomington, Cahokia, Carbondale, Centralia, Champaign, Danville, Decatur, Des Plaines, Dixon, Elmwood Park, Harrisburg, Effingham, Macomb, Bethany, Loves Park, Peoria, Quincy and Springfield.

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