



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White and the IPA Announce Spotlight Awards For Outstanding Literacy Students and Tutors

SPRINGFIELD – Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Press Association announced today the winners of the annual Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service awards recognizing outstanding literacy students and volunteer tutors in Illinois. The awards were presented during a ceremony at the Illinois State Library in Springfield.

"Every year I look forward to congratulating these outstanding students for their hard work and determination in seeking to obtain lifelong reading and learning skills," said Secretary White. "Those of us who learned to read and write at an early age cannot truly comprehend what a challenge it is for these students to undertake such tasks later in life. Many of them have had to overcome enormous difficulties and personal obstacles to reach this level of achievement. Theirs are stories of courage and amazing persistence, and all of us should be inspired by their success."

"I am also very proud to recognize our ten outstanding volunteer tutors for their generosity and encouragement in helping literacy students achieve their utmost potential. It is so important for each of us to give something back to our neighbors and our communities, and these heroes who help enrich and enhance the lives of their students are a shining testament to the positive impact that comes from volunteerism."

Twelve students were recognized for outstanding achievement in developing and improving their literacy skills:

Cholena and Kachina Dabney, students at Oakton Community College, Skokie
Ron Draper, who attends classes at YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin
Marc Girouard, John Wood Community College, Quincy
Richetta Harris-El, Lawrence Education Center, Springfield
Domenico Iannucci, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin
Armando and Mariela Mayorga, DeLaSalle/Tolton, Chicago
Lulu Qualls, Blue Gargoyle, Chicago
Oscar Ruiz, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Chicago
Jesse Veach, Common Place, Peoria
Freddie Williford, John A. Logan College, Carterville

The ten winners received a \$200 check from the Illinois Press Foundation, a plaque presented by Secretary White, a personalized Illinois Blue Book, and a set of books donated by Delta Systems.

Ten outstanding tutors were honored for their contributions in helping literacy students reach their goals:

Norma Barnwell, a volunteer tutor at John Wood Community College, Quincy
Mary Berger, Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights
Bob Gilbert, Lawrence Education Center, Springfield
James Himmelpach, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake
Steven Monroe, Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center, Chicago
Veronica Pacheco, Waubensee Community College, Aurora
Becky Price, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin
William Summers, Kaskaskia College, Centralia
Shirley Turbov, Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights
Panda Turner, Carl Sandburg College, Carthage

The ten winning tutors received a plaque and personalized Illinois Blue Book from Secretary White, and \$200 is donated by the Illinois Press Foundation to the literacy program where they serve as volunteer tutors.

Students and tutors are nominated from among the nearly 200 local providers who receive literacy grant funding from the Secretary of State/Illinois State Library Literacy Office. Last year adult literacy programs that received grant funding provided educational services to 22,150 adult students. 8,501 volunteer tutors gave their time to help students develop and enhance their reading, writing, math and language skills. Persons interested in becoming volunteer tutors are urged to contact the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline at **1-800-321-9511**.

“The Illinois Press Association and Foundation are proud to join Secretary of State Jesse White in honoring the recipients of the Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service awards,” said Kim Filson, Director of the Illinois Press Foundation. “This is a celebration of the achievements of 22 men and women who have improved the quality of their lives forever. They have done it by either learning to read better or by helping others to achieve their reading goals. Illinois newspapers are proud to be part of this commitment to help people overcome the crippling effects of illiteracy.”

(Profiles of the winning students and tutors are enclosed.)

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2009 SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVEMENT WINNERS

Cholena and Kachina Dabney, Oakton Community College, Skokie

After a traumatic break up of their family life, Cholena and Kachina were home schooled and virtually isolated for many years. When they entered the GED program they were faced with the challenges of diverse classmates, both in age and ability as well as personality and culture. They were uncomfortable in new groups, had to learn to share the teacher's attention with others, be flexible enough to embrace time limits on different subjects and to switch to different subjects with different groups in classroom settings. With humor, determination and persistence, they adapted very well. In fact they became confident enough to help other students who were struggling. They have bloomed from shy, unfocused dreamers into confident young women with goals and the plans to accomplish them. While they were excellent creative writers, they had to make their everyday writing more grammatically correct. They both worked hard and increased their reading scores considerably. Their plans include getting their GED and opening a bookstore together. Reading has opened the world to them and they want to learn more about the world they live in.

Ron Draper, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin

Ron has been in and out of adult education programs for many years. But this time he has a greater motivation to succeed. He is a widower who is raising his stepson. He sees in his stepson similar learning difficulties to those he experienced. He wants to be able to help his stepson with homework so that he doesn't end up in a special education program like Ron did. Ron has successfully held a good job and raised two families with only a special education certificate, but now Ron has been empowered to do even more. Through adult literacy, he is making a better life for himself and his stepson. His goal is to improve his reading and writing so he can get a better job with the lumber company where he currently works as a truck driver. When it came time to renew his driver's license, he had to pass several tests to keep his job as a truck driver. Unfortunately, he did not pass everything and he lost his job. The good news is his tutor worked with him on the part he failed. When he retook the test, he passed and was back on the job within a week. In the short time that he has been working with a tutor, he has read his first full-length adult novel, his own mail and his newspaper. He is on his way.

Marc Girouard, John Wood Community College, Quincy

Marc was identified with dyslexia early in life. When he graduated from high school he read at the 2nd grade level. This learning disability contributed to low self-confidence and kept him from finding a job and moving away from home. When his tutor, Norma Barnwell, and the literacy program at John Wood Community College came into his life, everything changed. Norma, who is also a Spotlight on Service winner, took the time and effort to teach him the fundamentals of learning to read using phonics. After working with Norma for a few years, Marc achieved many of his personal goals. He raised his reading level, completed the Electrical Mechanics Program at the local college and moved away from home for the first time in his life. He has a full-time job but is looking for a better job that will make use of his training. Reading is still not easy for Marc but through the skills Norma has taught him, he is not afraid to try to figure out what something says. The future looks bright for Marc and he is looking forward to many more accomplishments.

Richetta Harris-EI, Lawrence Education Center, Springfield

Richetta had never read a book at the time she enrolled in the program at Lawrence. She is the mother of four children and her daughter was following in her footsteps. At age eleven her daughter had given up on school. Richetta, as a mother, did not want that for her daughter. Richetta works at a local restaurant and that is where Barbara from Lawrence Education Center came into her life. Barbara was a customer and began talking about where she works. Richetta told Barbara that she wished she could get an education. Barbara told her she could and gave Richetta the information she needed. She opened the door to one of Richetta's biggest wishes. In a few months, Richetta's confidence improved along with her literacy. Her daughter began noticing her mother's interest in school and that she was reading book after book. Richetta was able to help her daughter with schoolwork and got her interested in reading books and succeeding in school. Now they have begun making trips to the library and to Barnes & Noble together. Reading has given Richetta a happier family.

Domenico Iannucci, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin

Domenico arrived in the United States from Italy in 2002 at the age of 71 and not knowing a word of English. He was entirely dependent on his English-speaking wife to navigate him through his new culture. He even needed her to drive him around. As a former pilot, it was discouraging for him to have someone drive him where he needed to go. In just a few years of participating in the YWCA adult literacy program, he received a driver's license, learned to read food labels and grocery advertisements and purchased a house. He has come a long way. His next goal was to learn how to use a computer which he achieved in six short months. He enjoys emailing his children and grandchildren in Italy and researching his hobbies on the Internet. He has also mastered a web cam so he can visit with his family and friends in Italy. He is working very hard on becoming a U.S. citizen. To show how much he values his tutor and the literacy program, he carefully dresses in a suit and tie for each session and begins and ends every session profusely thanking his tutor and the staff, bowing and shaking hands all around.

Armando and Mariela Mayorga, DeLaSalle/Tolton, Chicago

Armando and Mariela met each other in Mexico as children and then again as adults while attending an English as a Second Language (ESL) class at the Toman Library. Both worked very hard learning English that first year. They fell in love and Mariela had to go back to Mexico since she was here only as a visitor. They were married in Mexico and Armando came back to the U.S. to continue his ESL classes. He not only wanted to improve his English but also to pass his citizenship exam. Finding out his new bride was pregnant put even more stress on Armando. However, he achieved his first dream and became a U.S. citizen. Now the long process to bring his wife and baby back to the U.S began. In the mean time, Mariela was determined to improve her English as she waited to be rejoined with her husband. They were reunited last September and all three came to the U.S. to live. They joined the family literacy program and continue to participate in many family literacy activities. Their daughter's primary language is Spanish but her parents read English books to her daily. By the time she is ready for school, their daughter will be wonderfully bilingual. Armando is currently attending a job-training course and Mariela and their daughter continue attending English classes.

Lulu Qualls, Blue Gargoyle, Chicago

Lulu grew up in Mississippi and had no formal education as a child. She only learned to write her name. She moved to Chicago with her husband and baby in the 1950's. She eventually raised 10 children. Once they were all in school, she helped provide for her children's needs by working in a drapery factory and by cleaning homes and offices. Nearly all of her children have made productive lives for themselves. Even though she has successfully raised a family and worked many jobs, Lula refuses to sit back and watch her dreams of improving her literacy skills pass her by. When she began working with her tutor, she could not read at all. She began learning the alphabet and has made progress in her phonemic awareness and vocabulary. She has also gained a whole new level of self-confidence. She is determined to learn to read and feels it is an attainable goal. She also has a deep desire to write to her granddaughter who is currently away at college, to read the Bible and participate more in her church life. Lulu navigates public transportation to and from school taking two separate buses across Chicago's south side four days a week. This would be an act of dedication for any adult learner, but especially for Lulu who is now 76 years old.

Oscar Ruiz, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Chicago

Originally from Mexico, Oscar was only able to attend school up to the 4th grade. Difficult situations in life made it hard to study beyond that in Mexico. When he came to the United States, he had a desire for learning. He began taking classes at Instituto several months ago. Because his work schedule made it difficult to attend school every day, he changed his work hours. His goal is to obtain the G.E.D and with the help of dedicated teachers, he will achieve that. But in the mean time, he is improving his Spanish, learning English and continuing his elementary education. Oscar is a very dedicated and fast learner.

Jesse Veach, Common Place, Peoria

The oldest of twelve children, Jesse had to leave school after the sixth grade to help support his family. As an adult, he retired from Caterpillar after working there for 30 years. He wanted to volunteer at the American Red Cross as a driver which meant he needed a commercial driving license. He tried to enroll in the program at Illinois Central College but his reading level was too low. He was referred to Common Place for help with his reading. He worked diligently to learn to read and better himself. He was able to start volunteering as a driver ten years ago at the American Red Cross. Two years ago, with improved reading and dedication, he was able to get a full-time paid position as a driver. At the age of 76, Jesse proves that you are never too old to learn. He is an inspiration to all learners and tutors at Common Place.

Freddie Williford, John A. Logan College, Carterville

Freddie lost his job at a local manufacturing plant where he had been working most of his life. With only a fourth grade education, he felt lost even as he pursued another job. The plant that closed, had offered him the chance to go back to school but he could not fill out the paperwork. Freddie relied on his wife for many things because of his low reading skills. But his wife would not be with him in the classroom and Freddie doubted his own abilities. He was very timid and shy when he first started Adult Basic Education class. He is now able to read the newspaper, books, articles and instruction manuals without having to ask his wife for help. He is more independent and has more confidence in himself. Freddie now believes that he can reach his goals and is planning to take the GED test. He also plans to attend John A. Logan College majoring in Small Engine Repair so he can start a business. He is an inspiration to many students who are struggling when he tells them to keep trying because things will get better.

2009 SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE WINNERS

Norma Barnwell, John Wood Community College, Quincy

Norma began volunteering as a tutor ten years ago after she retired from teaching first grade. She had time on her hands and wanted to use her teaching skills in a different way. Her first students were a married couple that spoke very little English. After a short period of time, they spoke English fluently, obtained good jobs and also obtained their U.S. citizenship. In fact, they became such good friends that when Norma became ill and needed help, they brought her food and visited with her as she recuperated. Norma's next student was Marc Girouard, who is a Spotlight on Achievement winner this year. She researched his dyslexia and arranged to meet with him twice a week for shorter sessions instead of once a week for a longer session. She quickly deduced Marc's interests and capitalized on them. With Norma's help, Marc graduated from a technical school and volunteered at the local community theater. He gained enough confidence that he decided to move away from home. The primary role of a volunteer tutor is to increase the literacy skills of adult learners. Norma does this, plus much more.

Mary Berger, Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights

After retiring, Mary wanted to do something that would be enjoyable, challenging and helpful to the community. That desire led her to District 214's Read to Learn literacy program to volunteer as a tutor. She began her training on one of the coldest days that tutor training was ever held. She drove herself to the training, wheeled herself in from the parking lot and arrived at the training room in a wheelchair. The trainers knew right then that Mary was someone special. Mary has been special ever since -- helping many students with reading and writing English. Her first English as a Second Language learner could not read in his native language and, due to an accident, was now in a wheel chair. That student not only learned how to read but he learned to how to live life to the fullest despite his disability. Mary is currently working with a small group and having fun getting to know people from China, Poland, Taiwan and Egypt.

Bob Gilbert, Lawrence Education Center, Springfield

At 90 years of age, Bob still walks several miles every day. He has walked as far as five miles one way to his tutoring appointments. Although he has had students with cars who have canceled their tutoring appointments because it was too cold, Bob has never canceled a tutoring appointment. After World War II, Bob ran a successful optical business. However, he had left home before completing high school, so, in the late 1980's, Bob came to Lawrence and earned his high school diploma. During this time he started to help other students. One of his teachers noticed and encouraged him to become a tutor. Bob has tutored adult learners that are disabled, incarcerated, in drug and alcohol abuse programs, in re-entry programs, dealing with homelessness, striving to get in the military and dealing with mental health issues. One of his former adult learners made a big impact on Bob when he told him how much his life had changed since he started tutoring. He had never been able to read but working with Bob, he began to read. He was so excited that he called his mom and started reading from a book. He said, "Hey mom, that was a book, a story, and I can read it. I can read, Mom." He could tell his mom was crying because she was so proud of him. And Bob was too.

James Himmelspach, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake

After retirement, Jim worked for two years at a company that trained customers to use their product. This helped him become comfortable speaking to groups and figuring out what clients need to know. When the job ended, he was looking for something that would keep him busy and also let him do something for others. When he heard about the Adult Literacy Program at McHenry County College, it seemed like the perfect fit. Jim chose to work with adults in English as a Second Language (ESL) because of the high need for volunteers in that area. When he started, he knew very little Spanish so he took a one-semester course. The literacy program also provided classes in Spanish for volunteers taught by ESL students who were more fluent in English. Learning a second language as an adult gave him a better appreciation for the difficulties the ESL students face in learning English. For six years Jim has taught two and one-half hours two nights a week. He not only participates in the required professional in-service trainings but also attends free workshops and uses his own money to attend literacy conferences. His greatest reward as a volunteer is seeing adult learners progress and advance. One of his memorable experiences was when he received a CD of Mexican music in the mail from an ESL student, along with a letter that was written in Spanish. In the letter, the adult learner told him that in his country it is considered somewhat foolish to volunteer except for helping your own family or neighbors. The learner told Jim the world needs more good people like him.

Steven Monroe, Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center, Chicago

The Anixter Center is a social service agency with a mission to assist people with disabilities to live, work and play successfully in the community. Seven years ago, Steve began teaching a creative writing class. On his first day, he worked with several different levels of reading abilities as well as different types of disabilities among the adult learners. The effort and excitement in the group impressed Steve so much that he committed on that first day to continuing to help out. He soon found out that there was a tremendous, untapped amount of creativity in the group. After reading short stories together, they decided to write their own story. Each week they discussed the characters, motivation, plot and purpose. All of their stories present people with challenges in a positive light. All members of the class contribute to the story. One of his students was severely challenged and it seemed next to impossible to engage him. After the first week, they worked together for one hour reading from the book they selected for that trimester. Steve would read and then the student would repeat his words for the entire hour. As class ended, Steven looked up from the book and saw that his student was sweating profusely with the strain and effort vivid on his face. With a lump in Steve's throat, he told the student "You did great today." The student didn't repeat Steve's words. He said, "I did great today!"

Veronica Pacheco, Waubonsee Community College, Aurora

As a student of Waubonsee Community College's English as a Second Language (ESL) program, she noticed a great need for tutors and volunteers. Once she graduated from the program, she decided to take the training to become a volunteer. For the last 12 years she has been volunteering in the ESL classroom and helping design materials to enhance the curriculum as well as volunteering for many other special projects. Several years ago, she began volunteering four nights a week in her mother's ESL classroom. Veronica always has a smile on her face, infinite patience and a willingness to help the students learn. One of her first students was attending classes with one of his daughters and had a hard time reading and writing even in his native Spanish language. They began working with the alphabet and she encouraged him to write simple sentences whenever he had spare time. He was reluctant to participate at first but as his confidence grew, his writing skills improved and he was more comfortable reading aloud when asked to do so. Even though he had to drop out of school because of conflicts with his work schedule, his improved reading and writing had a positive impact on his job where he is doing better than ever. Eventually he was able to return to school where he continues to improve his English and Spanish.

Becky Price, YWCA Adult Literacy, Pekin

Becky struggled in school and was diagnosed with an auditory processing disability. Because people took the time to help her, she was able to learn skills to cope with her disability. She believes that experience gave her an ability to relate to her student's difficulties in learning. Becky has been working with a young woman with severe emotional and other disabilities three hours a week for the last four years. Becky firmly states that her student has done more for her than she can possibly do for the student. Tutoring has taught Becky that she has what it takes to give back to someone else. She not only tutors but volunteers at her church, a local nursing home and attends every tutor in-service training and every literacy event with her student. The two are frequent guest speakers at tutor training. Becky probably spends more time volunteering than working for pay. She is always looking for ways to help at the YWCA.

William Summers, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Will has been a volunteer tutor since 1995. He has worked with a variety of adult literacy students in reading, writing and math helping them reach their goal of obtaining a GED certificate. He attends continuing education sessions in order to be the best tutor possible. Currently he is tutoring one-on-one with two learners who have special needs. These learners' goal is to improve their reading and math skills. However because of their needs, they have a difficult time and their progress is slow. Will's patience and skills have helped these learners reach their goals and give them the self-esteem to continue with their education. Will believes that we should all do what we can to help other people. There are so many people that are in need of more education.

**Shirley Turbov, Township High School District 214 Community Education,
Arlington Heights**

When Shirley retired she was looking for something to do that was enlightening. So, she began volunteering as a tutor in 1996 and has been doing it ever since. She is currently tutoring a group of students in an English as a Second Language conversation class. She loves meeting people from different countries and learning about their culture. She develops a friendship by helping her students settle into life in the United States. In fact, Shirley met a young woman in her building that is from Turkey and brought her to the Read to Learn program. Since this young woman does not drive, Shirley drives her where she needs to go. They have formed a very strong friendship. When the semester ends, Shirley is not ready for any lengthy break. She informs her students that she will continue to tutor during summer break as well as the winter break. Some of her students stay in the United States and some have to go back to the native country. She always stays in touch with them. In fact one of her students missed Shirley so much that she and her husband came from Japan just to visit her. One thing Shirley has learned as a volunteer tutor is that all people are the same. They want the same things. They just speak different languages.

Panda Turner, Carl Sandburg College, Carthage

Once Panda graduated in 2006, she was given the opportunity to work with the literacy program. With a family of three children, she finds the time to volunteer as a tutor in math, reading and computers. She doesn't stop there, she will also pick up adult learners and their families to ensure their attendance in school, library events, parenting workshops and parent and child activities since public transportation is not available. She volunteered to get the necessary training so she could be the direct service person when the mental health center transported students to the Adult Basic Education class at Carl Sandburg. Panda helps in the English as a Second Language class and often pays for the snacks out of her own pocket. In return the students are teaching Panda to speak Spanish. This past December, Panda organized an Angel Tree for the children in the Family Literacy program. With the economy the way it is, the children would not have had a very good Christmas. It was a tremendous amount of work but worth it in the end. She hopes more people will volunteer their time and get as much enjoyment out of what they do as she does.