



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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

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

Illinois State Library Director Jean Wilkins, representing Secretary White, and IPA Board member Patrick Coburn, publisher of the *State Journal-Register* newspaper in Springfield, handed out the awards during ceremonies held in Springfield as part of the annual Illinois Family Literacy Conference.

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

- Karen Brown, a student at The Reading Link at Kaskaskia College in Centralia.
- Alquante (Quan) Foster, who attends a program offered by Black Hawk College in Moline.
- Marcia Harris and Annie Johnson, students at the Tolton Center in Chicago.
- Evadney Morris, a student at the Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program in Chicago.
- Alcira Parduhn, who attended classes offered by McHenry County College in Crystal Lake
- The Quesada Family (Milagro, Hernando, Rene and Ada), students at the Literacy Connection offered by Gail Borden Library in Elgin.
- Firyal Raho and Ludmila Virvica, who attend classes at Oakton Community College in Skokie.
- Cecelia Stuckie, a student at Chicago Commons in Chicago.

Spotlight on Achievement winners received a \$200 check from the Illinois Press Association Foundation, a plaque, a personalized copy of the Illinois Blue Book, a selection of books and a six month newspaper subscription courtesy of the winner's local daily newspaper.

"I am proud and honored to recognize these award-winning students for their hard work and determination to improve their reading, writing, math and language skills," said Secretary White. "The benefits they have obtained through their local literacy program will set them on the path to greater personal and professional success."

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

- Lee and Ted Cunningham, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights.
- Herb Feldman, Oakton Community College, Skokie.
- Barbara Fenneman, District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights.
- Cynthia (Cindy) Lively, Kaskaskia College, Centralia.
- Sara Logan, Spoon River College, Canton.
- Brad Perry, Waubonsee Community College, Aurora.
- Will Summers, Kaskaskia College, Centralia.
- Donna Thomas, Regional Office of Education, Peoria County, Peoria.
- Frances Vandervoort, Blue Gargoyle Adult Learning Program, Chicago.
- Mel Waskin, Oakton Community College, Skokie.

Spotlight on Service award winners received a plaque and personalized Blue Book, six-month newspaper subscription, and \$200 will be donated in the recipient's name by the IPA Foundation to the literacy program for which they volunteer.

“I also commend and congratulate our award-winning tutors for their generosity and selflessness in seeking to improve the lives of others,” White said. “They are a shining example to all of us that we should devote time and effort to making a positive impact in our communities.”

White said 37,779 students obtained reading, writing, math and language skills from 14,922 volunteers in Illinois during fiscal year 2003. Volunteer tutors provided more than 1.4 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 is proud to join Secretary White in co-sponsoring this event each year to provide well deserved recognition to outstanding literacy students and volunteer tutors,” said Coburn. “We are particularly pleased that this year, the IPA Foundation was able to increase the monetary awards handed out from \$100 to \$200. Illinois' nearly 600 plus daily and non-daily newspapers are committed to addressing literacy needs in our state, so that every citizen has the skills necessary to meet their personal and professional goals.”

SPOTLIGHT ON ACHIEVEMENT VIGNETTES 2004

Karen Brown, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Karen is a single mother who started classes at Kaskaskia College's The Reading Link when she was laid off from work two years ago. Karen, totally on her own, with no support from family or friends, was determined to succeed. She has increased her reading ability dramatically and is working towards a degree in childcare. Karen works part time at a Head Start daycare where she reads to the children. In addition, she works as a Spanish translator during home visits throughout the community. Karen has spoken at numerous events about being an adult learner and how her life has changed. She has worked very hard to get where she is today.

Alquante (Quan) Foster, Black Hawk College, Moline

Quan had no self-confidence, no self-respect and very little respect for others. This led him to a life of wrongdoing. One day he decided it was time for a change. Quan began working with a tutor at Black Hawk College and showed remarkable progress in one year. Quan travels an hour and twenty minutes by bus to participate in the program. After working with a tutor, his reading ability has improved and he has enrolled in a vocational skills program. He is also involved in a Student Development class and is now working part time. In his apartment building, he volunteers as coordinator of

activities. Quan sees his daughter regularly to read stories with her. Since he has turned his life around, he is more confident about his future.

Marcia Harris, Tolton Center, Chicago

Marcia, the mother of three and grandmother of five children, has suffered terrible hardships in her life. Since enrolling in Tolton Center, both her reading ability and her self-confidence have grown tremendously. Marcia exhibits leadership by reaching out and encouraging other students. She looks forward to taking college courses and obtaining a job where she can use her new skills. During the past year, she has had an impact on her family, encouraging her daughter who has now earned her GED, and her grandson, who is now attending college. Marcia's efforts have clearly strengthened the family bond.

Annie Johnson, Tolton Center, Chicago

Annie is a mother of four and grandmother to nine children. Her children's education was always important to her. She volunteered in her children's classrooms and served on the local school council. When she was laid off from one of her jobs, Annie decided it was time to focus on her own education. From the first day, Annie put all her energy into restarting her education. Although she has a large family depending on her at home, Annie always comes to school with her homework complete. At first her grandchildren helped her. Now she helps them. Additionally, she is able to read books to them, and this makes her feel good. She is currently a crossing guard at a local school and when the kids see her book bag, she tells them "I'm in school, too!" Annie's enthusiasm for education is contagious.

Evadney Morris, Blue Gargoyle, Chicago

Evadney came to Chicago from Belize 30 years ago. She raised her family and worked to put them through school. One day at work, she decided she would like to go to school and mentioned it to her employer. Her boss told her about Blue Gargoyle's adult classes. On the first day of class, Evadney read out loud. Her reading has improved and now a new world has opened up for Evadney. She can read the labels at the grocery store, read the newspaper, understand math, and read the Bible. Finally, she read her first book as an adult in America. She is also able to write and send letters to her family in Belize. This gives her great joy. Her enthusiasm for learning is an inspiration.

Alcira Parduhn, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake

Alcira arrived from Colombia unable to speak a word of English. Being shy and without friends or family to support her, she had to make the difficult transition of adjusting to life in America. She joined a class and worked hard to learn English at McHenry County College (MCC). Now she reads the newspaper, has written her resume and is prepared for job interviews. She is also able to communicate better. Alcira is currently volunteering at MCC to teach Spanish at in-service workshops for volunteer tutors. She

is an excellent example to other students because of her achievements and her commitment to volunteer for the literacy program.

The Quesada Family (Milagro, Hernando, Rene and Ada), The Literacy Connection, Elgin

The Quesada family fled Colombia due to the dangerous political unrest there and the severe economic problems facing that country. They left behind their home and careers. In the United States, the family has had to overcome cultural shocks. In order to attend classes at the Gail Borden Library, the Quesadas walk in all weather conditions 45 minutes one way. They are determined to learn English as soon as possible so they can attend college. Since being matched with their tutors, all four members of the family have attended their tutoring sessions without fail. Rene is currently working as a teacher's assistant in a Chicago school. Hernando is taking classes at Elgin Community College. Milagro is volunteering her services at a not-for-profit organization that helps Spanish-speaking people with such things as immigration problems. The family's final goal is to obtain jobs so that they can become productive members of our society.

Firyal Raho, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Firyal worked two jobs to put her six children through college. Until now, she had no time to learn English. Since beginning classes at Oakton Community College, she is able to do some recreational reading and write in a journal on her own. At work, she has been given more responsibilities since she can now read the menu. Her attendance and punctuality at class have been outstanding. Firyal seeks out additional tutoring from her instructor outside of class, and studies on her own at home while continuing to work more than 50 hours per week.

Cecelia Stuckie, Chicago Commons, Chicago

Cecelia was shy and reserved when she first came to Chicago Commons. She has become a role model for adult learners. She is someone who has worked hard to get to where she is, and has not missed one day of school since starting classes at Chicago Commons. The impact Cecelia has had on her family is amazing. Both her children and grandchildren have become interested and involved with education. They enjoy reading and having someone read to them. Cecelia also helps her classmates with their schoolwork, especially math.

Ludmila Virvica, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Ludmila, the mother of nine children, immigrated to the United States in June 2000 without her family. Alone and with only the help of a friend in the Chicago area, she left her family because of hard economic conditions in Latvia. Through perseverance and continuous effort to improve her English proficiency, Ludmila was able to retain her position as a caretaker for an elderly couple until they passed away just recently. Not to be deterred, she found another position and continues to be gainfully employed. Not only

does she support herself as a single woman alone in a new country, she has been able to support her children back in Latvia, as well as providing funding for one of her sons to attend college. With only one day off each week, Ludmila continues the long commute to her literacy classes in Niles. Whatever challenges come her way; she copes and does so in a friendly, joyful manner.

SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE VIGNETTES 2004

Lee and Ted Cunningham, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights

When Ted retired after 43 years in the automotive industry, he wanted a new challenge in his life. When his wife, Lee, read about literacy tutoring in the local newspaper, they began tutoring together. Lee tutors English and Ted tutors math, expanding their volunteer work this year to include inmates at the Cook County Jail. Lee says if she can convince her students that they just need to work together “until the light bulb goes on”, a little spark of hope smolders and they make progress. Lee had one thirty-something student who had been in high school when integration began. During that time the student wasn’t able to concentrate, because of hostility and fear. Although her oral language skills were good, she was convinced she couldn’t write and needed to improve her written skills for her job. After a year of conversation, writing and explanation, one day the student’s face revealed sudden pain and she grabbed her head. When Lee asked what was happening, the student smiled and said, “The light bulb went on and it hurt!”

Herb Feldman, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Herb retired as an elementary school teacher and felt tutoring would provide him an opportunity to give something back to his profession. He enjoys the challenges of working with adults and has learned a lot about various cultures from students he tutors. “It is very satisfying to see students advance from writing simple sentences to creating well-written compositions”, he says. Since Herb has befriended his students, they reciprocate with invitations to important events in their lives such as weddings. He guides his students in learning the skills they need to become more fluent and, thus, more active in our society. Volunteering as a literacy tutor has been a wonderful experience for Herb.

Barbara Fenneman, Read to Learn for a Brighter Future, District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights

When the tutoring site opened in Barbara’s church, it was a natural extension for her to become a volunteer literacy tutor. She wants to share her passion for reading with others, and tutoring is a way to do that. Barbara suffers from a physical disability, but doesn’t let that interfere with her love of tutoring. The reason she stays involved is the joy she sees on her students’ faces and the pride they show when they accomplish something. This is the “thanks” and she loves it. One of her fondest tutoring memories is a student that had worked with a tutor that used children’s books. When she began tutoring with Barbara,

she requested they use books for adults. Now, that student is very excited to come to class and is anxious to talk and read. You can see it in the student's excited smile when the sentences come together. Her comprehension is amazing and she is proud of her accomplishments.

Cynthia (Cindy) Lively, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Cindy volunteers as a literacy tutor to help fulfill an old desire to become a teacher. This is also her way of giving back to her community and helping others to learn to read. "It is so rewarding to see the light in the student's eyes as they start to achieve their goals," she says. "You can see a difference in their attitudes as they gain knowledge and the confidence they need to succeed." One of Cindy's students passed the GED and began taking college courses. Another non-reader gained skills, bought books and began reading to his grandchildren. These are the types of successes that have kept Cindy volunteering as a tutor for more than 16 years.

Sara Logan, Spoon River College, Canton

Sara's mother taught her at a young age to value reading. Her mother's influence has increased her willingness to be instrumental in helping others learn. Many of her students have had to overcome difficulties to reach their goals, such as finding childcare for young children at home, broken homes, speech problems, drug situations and low self-esteem. Students feel comfortable with Sara and are confident in her ability to help them achieve their goals. She goes the extra mile to ensure her students learn. "It is so rewarding to get a phone call letting you know they got the job," she says. "It feels good to get a hug from a student to say thanks." Needless to say, Sara loves being a volunteer tutor.

Brad Perry, Waubensee Community College, Aurora

After graduating from Aurora University, Brad missed school and took basic reading training and began helping in the GED classroom. He then took ESL (English as a Second Language) training and began helping in ESL classes. "I have been an ESL instructor now for 10 years," he said. "I love it. It's never boring." His students respond to his teaching manner with great smiles and amazing progress. A student from Colombia completed the ESL program. Her exams and essays were almost perfect. Yet she was determined to speak English without a Spanish accent. They would meet for an hour each week for conversation and pronunciation practice. Now she is a teacher's assistant in the Aurora Public School System. Another lady from the Ukraine began ESL classes, and with additional help before class, they prepared for the Citizenship test and she passed it in 2003. The rewards are many as a volunteer tutor, and Brad looks forward to helping more students achieve their goals.

Will Summers, Kaskaskia College, Centralia

Will is dedicated and devoted to his students. He keeps in touch as much as possible to see how they are doing and what they are accomplishing. When one of his learners was placed in jail, they didn't take a break; they continued working together while the learner was incarcerated. He willingly works with students who have challenges beyond the academic area. He works with students who progress slowly, who are demanding and hard to please. He asks students questions about their interests, hobbies and favorite foods and implements these things into the lessons. He knows students will be motivated to learn about things that are important to them personally. Will has also helped tutor in the workplace literacy program, helping a local auto parts manufacturer by tutoring math and language for employee advancement.

Donna Thomas, Regional Office of Education - Peoria County, Peoria

When Donna saw a Literacy Volunteer recruitment ad on television, the message went straight to her heart. She really wanted to volunteer, but her circumstances were not ideal for assuming another responsibility. Each time she saw the ad again, she was jolted anew. Finally, Donna signed up for her first volunteer tutor workshop in 1986. Donna has many rewarding memories of students she has tutored. One of her most challenging experiences was working with a student who asked Donna to sew an outfit for her. It turned out well, and the student seemed to be very happy with the results. Donna goes above and beyond when helping students. For instance, a young man called the program when he arrived in Peoria from Hong Kong, where friends had told him that she was the best tutor in Peoria. Even though Donna lives 45 miles from Peoria, she has never refused a student because of the traveling distance. She will even flex her hours at work to accommodate her student's tutoring hours.

Frances Vandervoort, Blue Gargoyle, Chicago

Before starting as a volunteer literacy tutor, Frances was a science teacher who recognized and appreciated her students' different learning needs. She enjoys the challenge of thinking up creative ways to convey material that not only addresses her learner's academic needs but also speaks to their interests. She helps others appreciate the beauty, elegance and absolute necessity of the printed word. Frances has worked with several students at Blue Gargoyle who impressed her. When one student was shattered by the sudden death of the grandmother she idolized, she wrote a lovely poem describing the beauty of her grandmother's smile. Another student from Jamaica demonstrated his manners by thanking her at the end of every tutoring session. Unfortunately, he was at "the wrong place at the wrong time" and did not live to see his adored daughter reach her second birthday. There has been joy, sadness and always hope that her students will be active participants in a better world.

Mel Waskin, Oakton Community College, Skokie

Mel structures his retirement around his commitment to adult literacy and is willing to help the program wherever the need is greatest. Frequently, Mel enriches his teaching methods by using experiences he brings back from travels. His visits to China, Japan, Tibet and the South Pole give his learners an opportunity to learn and discuss new terminology and other cultures. Mel also learned several key phrases in a half dozen languages to help his students feel more at home. Mel is an experienced, dedicated, creative tutor who loves the English language. His joy in tutoring opens up our language to many students from different lands that learn to speak, use and love the English language under his guidance.