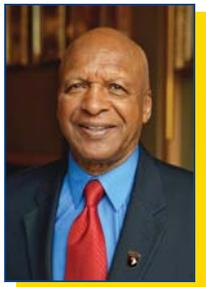


ILLINOIS LITERACY

FALL
2017

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

Celebrating the achievements of adult learners remains one of the greatest joys I experience as Secretary of State and State Librarian. I had the pleasure of attending the Night of 1000 Stars event in Chicago on its 20th anniversary. Learners shared original poems that illustrated the remarkable strides they have achieved in their educational journey. As a former educator, I know the importance that recognition provides in building confidence and self-esteem in learners. In this edition, I am honored to congratulate the Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service award winners. Featured are the inspirational stories of these adults and the citizens who volunteer their time to help adult learners succeed.



The Illinois Literacy Foundation works to ensure that every Illinois citizen has access to literacy services that place them on a path to lifelong learning. I had the pleasure of hosting a local author at a foundation event during the American Library Association's annual conference in Chicago to help highlight the mission of the foundation. Please visit the foundation's webpage for information to learn how to become involved or host an event.

Each year, it is my privilege to sponsor Family Reading Night in Illinois. I encourage you to mark your calendars for this year's event on Thursday, Nov. 16. This is a special night for libraries and families across the state. Please consider participating at your local library or literacy program.

Jesse White

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Secretary of State & State Librarian

Night of 1000 Stars celebrates 20th anniversary

Adult learners and literacy program staff gathered in May at the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago to celebrate the achievements of adult literacy students. The theme of the event was "Coming Together" and featured performances by adult learners along with speeches from local dignitaries including Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White.

I am proud to show my support for the adult learners and the amazing literacy programs that provide these learners with the opportunities to improve their lives through education," said White. "I take great pride in knowing that because of the funding my office provides these literacy programs, adult learners are making great strides in becoming better educated and more fluent in English."

The night's performances included original poems in both English and Spanish written by the learners. Mina Parmar, a student from the Indo-American Center in Chicago's West Ridge neighborhood, sang a song she had written. Mina's song offered advice to all of the adult learners to grasp the moment at hand while not worrying about the past or what the future may hold. The song was sung in Hindi and translated into English.

The event was hosted by the North Side, South Side and West Side literacy coalitions. It marked the first time that these three advocacy groups joined together

as hosts of the Night of 1000 Stars. The Chicago City-wide Literacy Coalition, Chicago Public Library and Dollar General Literacy Foundation sponsored the event.



Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White with Mina Parmar during the Night of 1000 Stars.

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In May, Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White honored adult learners and volunteer tutors with the Spotlight on Achievement and Spotlight on Service awards ceremony at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. The Spotlight on Achievement Awards are presented to adult learners who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments as they work toward improving their reading, writing and math skills or learning the English language. These awards are also presented to adult literacy volunteer tutors who display outstanding dedication in assisting adult learners as they achieve their educational goals.

"I am honored to congratulate these outstanding students for their hard work and determination to attain lifelong reading and learning skills," said White. "Many have had to overcome great difficulties and personal obstacles to reach this level of achievement. I am also proud to recognize our outstanding volunteer tutors for their generosity and encouragement in helping literacy students achieve their utmost potential."

At the ceremony, Illinois State Library Deputy Director Greg McCormick presented the winners with a \$550 check for their literacy program, a commemorative plaque and a personalized "Illinois Blue Book." The following are highlights of the winners' stories, which are available online at www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

Adult learner winner highlights:

Jose Acebedo – PODER Learning Center, Chicago. In 2014, Jose and his family first arrived in Chicago from Honduras as a result of a medical emergency involving his youngest son. He always had a desire to learn English, but with his son's condition, it became essential for him to be able to communicate directly with the doctors. In 2015, Jose found PODER Learning Center's program online and enrolled immediately. Despite the few opportunities Jose seemed to have to advance his life in the United States, he flourished and became an inspiration to fellow students and his family. Jose was determined to succeed regardless of the adversity he faced and desired to give back to the community that helped him when he most needed it. He is dedicated to assisting other students who are struggling with English and hopes to make a positive impact on their lives.

Shabnam Arabshahee – Literacy Volunteers of DuPage, Naperville. Shabnam came to the United States from Afghanistan by way of Pakistan, where she worked for the United Nations searching for other Afghan women who had no husbands, families or homes. She did this for three years, before coming to the United States. Not knowing a word of English, she obtained a job with a company processing mail where, due to her lack of knowledge of English, she worked alone and did not talk to any co-workers. She was also a seamstress in her spare time, but lost customers because of her poor communication skills. She quit her mail processing job so she could concentrate on learning English. While at the Villa Park Library, she saw a notice for Literacy DuPage, contacted them and was soon matched with a tutor. Four years later she can confidently and independently speak on the phone, make doctor's appointments or go shopping because of her hard work in

studying the English language. She is also able to use a computer to search for a better job. Learning English has changed her life.

Rose Hotchkiss – YWCA, Pekin. For Rose, getting her GED was something she wanted to accomplish her whole life. She lacked a high school education which proved to be a significant barrier to establishing a career. She wanted the GED certificate for her own self-improvement and due to her desire to begin a career in early childhood education. With her tutor, she began by improving her basic computation skills with whole numbers, fractions and decimals. Next she went on to master geometry and slowly built an understanding of algebra. By the time she attempted the GED math test, she demonstrated the ability to solve two-step equations. Although Rose often despaired over if she would ever learn algebra, she kept working hard. When the time came to take the GED Ready test, she failed not once, but three times, yet she kept working hard and refused to stop working toward her goal. She finally passed the test with a score of 145 and continues her ambitious journey of furthering her career.

Shawn Wheeler – Richland Community College's Project READ, Decatur. Shawn has endured adversity her entire life. She was a high school dropout and a single mother of three. When her mother died suddenly, Shawn's world collapsed. Lapsing into a deep depression, Shawn found herself barely able to function. Ten years later she was working as a janitor and needed education and credentials to keep her job, but had low skills and very little self-esteem. She then encountered Project READ and together with tutors they began to build Shawn's foundational knowledge, which allowed her to experience success on a daily basis. As her academic skills improved, her growing confidence overcame her feelings of futility. Now she tackles challenges, learns from mistakes and celebrates her progress. She recruits prospective students for Project READ and speaks with prospective tutors. Her goal is to obtain her GED and then go on to community college. Shawn is enthusiastic in her message that reading and Project READ have changed her life for the better.

George Wright – Literacy Chicago. George has faced many challenges in his life: growing up without a father, a head injury as a youth, the lack of a high school diploma, incarceration for four years and the death of his wife. While incarcerated, George resolved to never return and to change his life when he was released. One day in a Family Dollar store, he saw a sign advertising the program at Literacy Chicago. He called, and even though he was embarrassed to admit his inability to read, he was welcomed by people who understood and respected him. At the outset his skills were at an elementary level, but slowly, with the help of his tutors, he increased his reading, writing and comprehension abilities. At the same time, his confidence increased to the point that he became a leader amongst his fellow students. He is now a mentor to other students, as well as a spokesperson for Literacy Chicago, touting the importance of basic literacy and adult education. A leader in the classroom and adult education advocate, George has totally transformed his life.



2017 Spotlight on Achievement winners – from left to right: Debra Aggertt, associate director for Grants, Programs, and Literacy, Illinois State Library; Jose Acebedo, PODER Learning Center, Chicago; Rich Dominguez, Literacy Chicago, accepting on behalf of George Wright; Rose Hotchkiss, YWCA, Pekin; Shabnam Arabshahee, Literacy Volunteers of DuPage, Naperville; Shawn Wheeler, Project READ, Decatur; Greg McCormick, deputy director, Illinois State Library.



2017 Spotlight on Service Award winners – from left to right: Debra Aggertt, associate director for Grants, Programs and Literacy, Illinois State Library; Rebecca Binks, De La Salle Institute's Tolton Center, Chicago; Raylynn Stokes, Adult Literacy coach at South Suburban College, South Holland, accepting on behalf of Gerald Chaben; Margaret Field, De La Salle Institute's Tolton Center, Chicago; Julie Pangrac, Literacy Program coordinator, Project READ, Decatur, accepting on behalf of Susanna Foster; Margaret Goldstein, Literacy Chicago; Greg McCormick, deputy director, Illinois State Library.

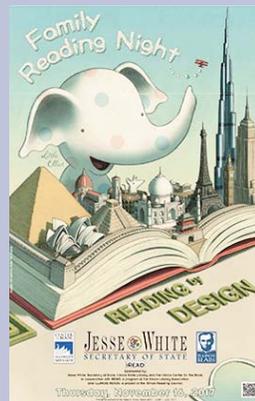
Volunteer tutor winner highlights:

Rebecca Binks – De La Salle Institute's Tolton Center, Chicago. Teacher, mentor and trench worker are the titles bestowed upon Rebecca at Tolton Center. She is flexible, adaptable and willing to offer support in everything, including cleaning, organizing and spending her own money to help in any way she can. She has volunteered her services during this troubled time of budget cuts to adult literacy programs in Illinois. She believes that literacy is the foundation for a healthy, vibrant community and has a passion for helping students who often have numerous barriers blocking them from achieving their educational goals. Because of her patience and teaching strategies in reading and writing, she has brought the world to her students.

Gerald Chaben – South Suburban College, South Holland. Tutoring at South Suburban College for 15 years and counting, Gerald has volunteered countless hours of instructional time with his adult learners. He believes that adult literacy is a vital component of society and people with better literacy skills are more likely to have

(Cont. on pg. 4)

Family Reading Night 2017



"Family Reading Night" (FRN) is sponsored by Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Center for the Book in cooperation with iREAD and Illinois Reads, a project of the Illinois Reading Council. This year the Secretary of State continues the partnership with iREAD, a program of the Illinois Library Association, to continue the "Reading by Design" summer

reading theme through FRN. This annual celebration of families reading together is held on the third Thursday of November. Schools, libraries, youth and literacy organizations throughout the state will host a variety of FRN programs on Thursday, Nov. 16, which highlight the "Reading by Design" premise.

Thanks to this partnership, the Little Elliot design of the "Reading by Design" theme will be featured on the 2017 FRN posters and bookmarks, which are available for download at http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/center_for_the_book/frn.html. The site also includes information on possible ideas to incorporate into FRN activities.

"As always, I encourage libraries, literacy programs and families to participate in this annual event," explained Secretary White. "The importance of not only reading but reading together as a family is immeasurable. You will be creating positive memories that will last forever and hopefully continue on through future family generations."

Libraries and literacy programs are encouraged to share stories and photographs of their FRN activities. Please email these stories and photographs to literacy@ilsos.net.

Literacy Foundation Author Event

In June, librarians and friends joined Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White in welcoming author Leslie Parry as guest speaker for the Illinois Literacy Foundation luncheon. As attendees enjoyed a meal at Maggiano's, Parry read an excerpt from her work, "Church of Marvels," to them. Her novel, a suspenseful tale set in New York in the 1890s, intertwines storylines involving a missing woman, a circus fire, a founding and a corrupt asylum. Parry generously donated her time for the event in order to help raise awareness for the Illinois Literacy Foundation and its mission. She graciously signed copies of her book for the attendees. Please visit www.theillinoisliteracyfoundation.org to view photos from the luncheon and learn additional information about promoting and supporting literacy among Illinois residents.



higher self-esteem, better health, better jobs and higher wages. He is active in helping his students become more confident in learning and bettering themselves in life. He always asks his learners what they need help with that day, whether it is class work or life skills. He worked with one student for 10 years, eventually raising her reading ability by five levels. This is one of the many examples of the dedication Gerald has demonstrated towards his students.

Margaret Field – De La Salle Institute’s Tolton Center, Chicago. At Tolton, tutors have a motto: “Everyone teaches, everyone learns.” This is what drew Margaret to volunteer as a literacy tutor. Margaret has been working with adult basic education students since the fall of 2016. These learners include those struggling with undiagnosed learning disabilities; ex-convicts trying to get a GED so they can support their families without returning to crime; and undocumented immigrants who work long hours in hazardous jobs attempting to build a new life for their families while living in fear of deportation and separation. Margaret teaches fractions, decimals, division, multiplication and other basic math. Many students eagerly attend Margaret’s math class every week to further their math knowledge. Tolton Center staff members firmly believe that their program is better because of Margaret’s expertise, experience and compassion toward her students.

Susanna Foster – Richland Community College’s Project READ, Decatur. Susanna has volunteered as a tutor for Project READ since 2009. During this time, she has tutored numerous learners in reading and/or math and often works individually with three or more students during a day. While she has contributed countless hours to tutoring, her impact on Project READ goes deeper. Susanna collaborates with staff, conveying student needs and evaluating problems in order to move the students forward. Project READ uses her as a model for other tutors. New tutors observe her tutoring sessions. She also acts as an ambassador for the program, sharing her tutoring experiences with friends and family and encouraging others to consider volunteering. With her determination, selflessness and her love of learning, Susanna has changed numerous lives as a tutor for Project READ.

Margaret Goldstein – Literacy Chicago. Margaret joined Literacy Chicago in 2009 as a volunteer tutor. In her many years as a volunteer, she has functioned as a tutor, mentor, trainer to other tutors and classroom instructor for a conversation group of students learning English. Her direct approach with students and the mentoring of other tutors have been invaluable to the organization. Class retention and student participation increase when Margaret is conducting a class. She readily steps in to teach classes when needed, has created conversation classes, assists with new students, participates and presents in monthly tutor training sessions and serves as an advocate for literacy issues at many functions. Margaret enjoys teaching English and the sense of accomplishment knowing her teaching has made a difference in the lives of her students.

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Jesse White, Secretary of State and State Librarian
Greg McCormick, Deputy Director, Illinois State Library

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WWW



<http://familieslearning.org/health>

From the National Center for Families Learning, this site provides resources on family-oriented health activities such as healthy eating/menus, healthful daily routines, healthy activities for the whole family, and community organizations that promote and ensure healthy lifestyles.

https://www.richmondfed.org/education/for_teachers/lesson_plans_and_classroom_activities

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond offers this page of lesson plans, activities and publications all on the topic of financial literacy. The plans run through K-12 and contain excellent resources for adult learners.

<http://www.lvanca.org/TutorCentral.html>

This site, courtesy of Literacy Volunteers and Advocates of the District of Columbia, offers a number of online tutor resources covering topics such as phonics, reading materials, math, grammar, financial literacy and lesson planning.

ON THE HORIZON

- **October** – Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- **October 5-7** – Illinois Reading Council Conference, Peoria, IL, www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org
- **October 9-11** – Families Learning Summit, Tucson, AZ, www.familieslearning.org/
- **October 10-12** – Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, Tinley Park, IL, www.ila.org
- **October 31-November 3** – American Association for Adult and Continuing Educators, Memphis, TN, www.aaace.org
- **November 8-11** – International Dyslexia Association Reading, Literacy & Learning Conference, Atlanta, GA, www.interdys.org
- **November 16** – [Family Reading Night](#), the theme for 2017 is “Reading by Design”
- **November 16-19** – National Council of Teachers of English, St. Louis, MO, www.ncte.org
- **November 29** – December 2 – Literacy Research Association, Tampa, FL, www.literacyresearchassociation.org
- **December 8** – Northern Illinois Adult Education Conference, Itasca, IL, www.thecenterweb.org/alrc

More literacy event information is available at www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/literacy/home.html (click Calendar of Literacy Events).