Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White recently awarded more than $5.6 million in Adult Literacy Grants to help students develop and enhance their reading, math, writing and English language skills. More than 14,000 adult learners will be served in 78 Illinois counties, including over 900 families and more than 1,000 children who will participate in the Penny Severns Family Literacy Grant Program.

“An estimated 2.1 million Illinois residents need adult literacy and/or English-language instruction,” White said. “I am pleased to provide funding for 113 local literacy projects that will allow adult students to achieve their utmost potential in the upcoming year. I will continue to do all I can to ensure that every citizen of this state has access to quality literacy programs.”

The following descriptions are of the awards distributed:

**Adult Volunteer Literacy** — $4,032,472 was awarded to 71 projects to provide training for more than 6,000 volunteers who tutor adults over age 17 who read, write, compute or comprehend below the ninth-grade level, or score below SPL 7 for non-native English speakers.

**Penny Severns Family Literacy** — $1,364,312 was awarded to 30 projects that provide parents and children — both individually and together — instructional services to enhance their basic reading, math, writing or language skills. Grants are awarded to partnerships that include an adult literacy provider, a public library and a child-at-risk organization.

**Workplace Skills Enhancement** — $147,467 was awarded to nine educational agency and business partnerships that offer employees onsite instructional services to enhance their basic reading, math, writing or language skills; maintain their employment; and increase their eligibility for promotion. Grants are matched dollar-for-dollar by the participating business.

Three additional grants totaling $120,000 were awarded to three agencies that provide support to literacy projects throughout the state.
Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White honored the winners of the 2019 Spotlight on Literacy Awards, which recognizes participants in Illinois literacy programs. Ten adult learners received the Spotlight on Achievement Award and 10 volunteer tutors received the Spotlight on Service Award during a ceremony at the Illinois State Library in Springfield.

“I am honored to congratulate these outstanding learners for their hard work and determination to attain lifelong reading and learning skills,” said White. “Many of them have 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 learners achieve their utmost potential.”

In Fiscal Year 2019, 96 programs supported adult, family and workplace literacy efforts statewide.

At the ceremony, Secretary White presented each winner with a plaque and a personalized Illinois Blue Book. The following stories highlight the winners.

**Spotlight on Achievement winner stories:**

**Thanaa Alhasan — The Literacy Council, Rockford**
Thanaa came to the United States from Syria, escaping an environment of war and uncertainty. Upon her arrival, she immediately started to learn English and found it difficult because it was so different from her native language, Arabic. Learning English has made her more confident and independent. She was able to pass her driver's license test in English and can read maps and signs. She is able to speak to her children's teachers and take her children to doctor appointments without depending on a translator or help from a friend.

**Jimmie Brown — Common Place Family Literacy Center, Peoria**
Jimmie’s life has changed tremendously from the first time he came to Common Place five years ago. He had experienced substance abuse, poverty, incarceration and family challenges that could have prevented Jimmie from making life changes; however, his relationship with his tutor and Common Place helped him turn his life around through education. Jimmie explained, “When I found the Lord, I started to look for ways to ‘pay back’ for his blessings.” Jimmie is now a leader among student peers and their families and is respected by agency staff.

**Telma Cardona — Baby TALK, Decatur**
Telma began attending the family literacy program at Baby TALK four years ago when her oldest child was only 4 weeks old. She wanted to obtain her high school equivalency and to own her own home. She has accomplished one of those goals when she bought a house and she continues to make strides toward her high school equivalency. She aspires to attend college and pursue a career in healthcare. Telma says that “Baby TALK is a great program that not only helps you academically, but also helps you with a better vision of life and becoming a better parent.”
2019 Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards — (Cont. from pg. 2)

Silvia Chantes — Literacy DuPage, Naperville

Silvia’s progress in learning English over the last two years has allowed her to be promoted from a laborer position to a managerial position. Despite a busy work schedule and long shifts, she still put forth the effort to keep meeting with her tutor. Silvia recently received a significant raise and now explains to new employees, in English, the job she used to do. She trains employees, completes incident reports and quality control forms in English, and helps fellow non-native speaking employees understand their paychecks and personnel forms.

Leonard Green — Heart of Illinois Adult Literacy Center, Pekin

Leonard was raised in Mississippi. Unfortunately during his childhood education, he was passed from grade-to-grade without understanding what he was being taught. Leonard dropped out of school in the 10th grade. His wife, who was a librarian, encouraged Leonard to become a learner at the Heart of Illinois Literacy Center. Sadly, Leonard’s wife passed away a few months ago. He explains that before attending the literacy center he had never paid a bill, balanced a checkbook or dealt with a computer—all of which he can do now. Leonard is raising his sons, working full time and studying for his GED. He says that “I promised my wife that I would get my GED,” and he is committed to keeping that promise.

Julia Hernandez — Morton College, Cicero

After deciding to quit high school, Julia took several low paying jobs that did not support her family or offer chances for advancement. She decided to enroll in Project-CARE at Morton College and work with a tutor. Her dedication to her studies has helped Julia improve her reading and math skills to a level that has allowed her to enroll in the Bridge to Healthcare Program. Her goal is to eventually become a nurse. Julia says she finds the classes very challenging, but realizes the importance of her education. She is determined to not give up on her dream of finishing school.

Maria Gabriela Maya — Universidad Popular, Chicago

Maria is a hard-working mother of two young children. She wants to be a good role model for them and is studying to become a U.S. citizen. She takes English classes and regularly attends seminars on parenting and nutrition. She works the third shift and gets home at 6 a.m., in time to prepare her children for school. She plans her day around caring for them, helping with their homework, doing housework, and taking citizenship and English as a Second Language classes. Even with all of her responsibilities, Maria is making great strides in learning English and reaching her goals.

Mayaben John Parmar — Indo-American Center, Chicago

In just two short years, Mayaben has gone from a beginner level English to an advanced level learner. She works routinely with her tutor and attends small group sessions four days a week. She has had a difficult time with employment because of her English conversation skills, but has worked hard to get where she is today. “I am very thankful to the teachers at the Indo-American Center for helping me to reach my goals of improving my English and getting a stable job,” said Mayaben.

Peggy Runyon — Heart of Illinois Adult Literacy Center, Pekin

After experiencing many struggles in her personal life, Peggy enrolled in the literacy program at the Heart of Illinois Adult Literacy Center with the goal of obtaining her GED and securing a better-paying job. She has progressed in her reading comprehension and fluency, along with her vocabulary, all due to her work ethic and determination. Peggy has three daughters and seven grandchildren. She hopes she is setting a positive example for her family.

She hopes this will encourage two of her daughters to obtain their GED and show her grandchildren the importance of an education.

H.C. Warfield — Literacy Chicago

H.C. came to Literacy Chicago just over four years ago to improve his reading. He was turned away by many other agencies and told his test scores were too low for them to help. While H.C. has been successful in many business opportunities, his lack of literacy skills had been a hindrance in his personal and career development. Since coming to Literacy Chicago and working with volunteer tutors, his skills are improving. He has been a role model to his family and fellow students with his determination and is an inspiration to all at Literacy Chicago.

Spotlight on Service winner stories:

Shirley Blount — Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island

Shirley has been a mainstay of the literacy program at Corazón for the past seven years. Her motivation to help others speak English is especially admirable. Even after surgery, she was more than happy to return to Corazón and continue tutoring once she healed. She is very warm and patient, and her soft-spoken nature sets her learners at ease. Shirley says that although adult learners face many challenges and obstacles in their learning, she tries to offer encouragement and tells them that it is never too late to learn.

Sr. Lupita Cordero, SSND — Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island

Sr. Lupita Cordero is a true inspiration to all at Corazón. She has been a volunteer tutor for nearly 10 years and does not let being blind stop her from helping others, having gone so far as to commit all of the tutoring lessons and textbooks to memory. Sr. Lupita says “Being at Corazón has allowed me to meet many learners over the years. One of the most rewarding instances was tutoring a 70-year-old woman whose family kept telling her she could not learn. She worked so hard that she advanced enough to get a job translating for others.”

Lynn Cormwell — Literacy Volunteers of DuPage, Naperville

Literacy DuPage credits the success of its workplace literacy program to Lynn’s teaching expertise, dedication to helping others and teamwork. She was instrumental in the program’s design, spending hundreds of hours learning about the needs of the manufacturing workforce to develop a curriculum. Lynn is a perfect fit for the program because of her expertise and her kind heart. She connects with her learners and celebrates their personal milestones and educational achievements. Lynn says that volunteering with Literacy DuPage has been one of the most rewarding experiences in her life.

Vicki Cretors — Illinois Eastern Community College (Frontier), Fairfield

Vicki started tutoring 15 years ago and is still enthusiastic about her learners. Even when the program suspended operations during the state budget impasse, she continued to meet with English as a Second Language learners, and built a tutoring network of learners that kept her in touch with their needs. This kind of dedication exemplifies Vicki’s impact on the ESL learners in the community. “Tutoring has been one of the most rewarding things that I have done in my life, and it is a great feeling to know that I have helped to change someone’s life for the better,” Vicki explained.

Karen Fredrickson — Literacy Chicago

Karen joined Literacy Chicago four years ago to tutor adult literacy students. When called upon to take over an Adult Basic Education class as a substitute teacher for several
months, she did so graciously. She also dedicates two Saturdays each month to assist the tutor trainer and has continued not only as an assistant but as one of the two co-trainers. “When I was planning my retirement, being a literacy volunteer was always part of the plan. The four years I have been volunteering with Literacy Chicago have more than fulfilled my expectations,” Karen said.

Ann Hamlin — Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan
Ann’s enthusiasm for helping others to learn is contagious. She is always positive and motivates others to do their best. For years, she has specialized in tutoring those with unique learning disabilities. Coupled with her own belief in lifelong learning and the desire to help others learn, Ann is positive that everyone can learn to read and is not willing to take “I can’t” for an answer. On average, she works with a learner for four to five years and her longest match lasted 10 years. Ann and her learners never lose interest in their commitment of learning together.

Ann Hopkins — Literacy Volunteers of Illinois, Chicago
A tutor since 2012, Ann is dedicated to her students at the Illinois Youth Center in St. Charles — a correctional facility for young men. Ann provides a consistent, affirming presence to the men she works with, something very valuable in the often chaotic world of corrections. She is non-judgmental and accepts each student while treating him with kindness and respect. She said one of her best moments as a tutor was watching one of her students graduate and seeing him with a big smile on his face because he was so proud.

Judith Kagan — Oakton Community College, Skokie
Judy became a volunteer tutor almost 10 years ago and is beloved by her students, fellow tutors and lead instructor. She has remained a constant despite changes in the program, the location and the student population. Over the years, she has tutored students from all over the world and is currently working with women from Syria and Russia. “I have always loved words, their meanings, their derivations, and I try to pass that love along to my students. It is exciting every time a student recognizes a similarity between a word in their language and a word in English,” explained Judy.

Angelique Maguire — Illinois Eastern Community College (Frontier), Fairfield
Angelique was one of the first new volunteer tutors to show interest in and sign up for Illinois Eastern Community College’s Adult Volunteer Literacy Program after it had been shuttered during the state budget impasse. She became a key volunteer in the program’s early successes, and she continues to offer her services not only as a volunteer tutor, but also as an advisor to the literacy development coordinator. Angelique’s dedication and compassion for her learners is unmatched. She gives her whole heart and soul to those in this community who have been overlooked.

Diana Padua — Universidad Popular, Chicago
Despite her busy schedule, Diana dedicates three hours every Wednesday to volunteer as an adult literacy tutor. A mother of three and a graduate student at National Louis University, she is always eager to lend a helping hand to her learners. They are very grateful to have Diana as their facilitator when they practice everyday conversations in English. The conversation group allows the learners to increase their vocabulary and speaking skills. “Being appreciated and accepted at Universidad Popular motivates me to continue my work for and with the people,” said Diana.
ON THE HORIZON

- **October** – Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- **October 3-4** – Illinois Reading Council Conference, Peoria
  http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/conference.html
- **October 8-11** – American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, St. Louis, MO https://www.aaace.org/page/2019ConfLanding
- **October 22-24** – Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, Tinley Park https://www ila.org/
- **November 1** – Northern Illinois Adult Education Conference, Itasca
  http://www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/event-conference.html
- **November 4-6** – Families Learning Conference, Louisville, KY
  http://www.conference.familieslearning.org
- **November 7-10** – International Dyslexia Association Reading Literacy & Learning Conference, Portland, OR
  https://www.eiseverywhere.com/website/887/home/
- **November 21** – Family Reading Night, 2019 theme is “It’s Showtime at your Library!”
- **November 24-26** – National Council of Teachers of English, Baltimore, MD
  http://www2.ncte.org/groups/cel/convention/
- **December 4-7** – Literacy Research Association, Tampa, FL
  https://www.literacyresearchassociation.org/annual-conference

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

https://growingbookbybook.com/family-literacy-night-ideas-tips

PTO Today provides 20 fun family night ideas, a grab-bag of great activities to try on Family Reading Night. Not all specifically involve reading, but they can easily tie in to make the event even more fun-filled.

https://www.teachhub.com/teaching-strategies-run-successful-literacy-night
This page from Teachhub.com provides teaching strategies for a Family Reading Night event.

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