

LITERACY

FALL
2020

ILLINOIS

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

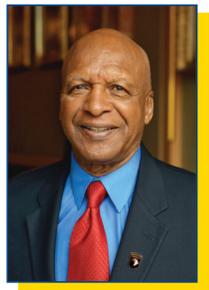
Literacy programs continue to serve adult learners throughout the state during the pandemic by adapting their services to adhere to social distancing rules, keeping participants safe. These agencies provide an essential service to the over 2 million Illinois residents in need of literacy services, and I am proud to be able to once again provide grants to these programs.

Each year, my office recognizes adult learners and volunteer tutors through the Spotlight Awards. In this issue, you will read about the Spotlight on Service winners who have dedicated their time to help their fellow citizens, as well as the Spotlight on Achievement winners who have benefited from those volunteers who have provided this invaluable service. Each group of award winners have put forth tremendous effort to accomplish its goals.

This autumn, I encourage all families to participate in the annual Family Reading Night held the third Thursday in November. This is an evening when families are urged to turn off electronic devices and spend time reading together.

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Jesse White awards nearly \$5.6 million in adult literacy grants

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White awarded nearly \$5.6 million in Adult Literacy Grants to help adult learners develop and enhance their reading, math, writing and English-language skills.

“An estimated 2.1 million Illinois residents need adult literacy assistance and/or English-language instruction, and I am pleased to provide \$5,596,894 to these 107 local literacy programs that will assist adult students,” White said. “I will continue to do all I can to ensure that all citizens of this state have access to quality literacy programs giving them the skills that put them on the path to lifelong learning.”

More than 13,500 students will be served by adult literacy programs statewide. Nearly 6,000 volunteer tutors provide skills training for students. Adult literacy projects help Illinois adults who read below the ninth-grade level or speak English at a beginning level to improve their reading, writing, math or English as a second language.

The following are descriptions of the awards distributed:

Adult Volunteer Literacy — \$4,065,468 was awarded to 67 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 — \$1,268,912 was awarded to 28 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 — \$137,514 was awarded to nine educational agency and business partnerships that offer employees on-site 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 \$125,000 were awarded to three agencies that provide support to literacy projects throughout the state.

Winners of the Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards announced

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White recently honored the winners of the 2020 Spotlight on Literacy Awards, which recognizes participants in Illinois literacy programs. Ten students received the Spotlight on Achievement Award and 10 volunteer tutors received the Spotlight on Service Award.

"I am honored to congratulate these exceptional adult learners for their dedication and determination to attain lifelong reading and learning skills," said White. "Many of them have overcome great difficulties and personal impediments 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."

In fiscal year 2020, 113 programs supported adult, family and workplace literacy efforts statewide.

Winners each received a plaque recognizing their achievement along with a personalized Illinois Blue Book. The following stories share highlights of the winners' experiences, which are also available online.

Spotlight on Achievement winner stories:

William Abel — Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights

Since childhood, William never wanted anyone to know that he had difficulty reading and writing. He was unable to write the alphabet and was reading at a first-grade reading level when he was referred to Township High School District 214's Read to Learn program. After receiving tutoring in adult basic education, he is now able to write the complete alphabet, read at a third-grade level and write his signature in script handwriting. In addition, his driver's license expired, and he felt at his age (81) it would be best to start taking public transportation, but was apprehensive due to his limited reading ability. With the help of his tutor, he has learned to correlate the announcements on the bus with the associated street signs to determine his stop.

Seble Burton — Lewis & Clark Community College, Godfrey

In August of 2019, Seble was working two jobs to support her family and disabled husband who lived in Ethiopia. She worked as a hotel housekeeper during the day and at a department store at night stocking shelves. She hoped to work only one job to support her family, so she sought employment at a local manufacturing company. When she was unable to pass the entry-level test, the company referred her to Lewis & Clark's Project READ. After five months of meeting twice a week with a tutor, she was able to show significant gains on her assessment and was referred back to the manufacturing company for another chance to take the entry-level test. Seble passed her test and was hired for a full-time position.

Doris Gooden — Literacy Chicago, Chicago

Doris is an artist, and drawing is her passion. She disliked school as a child because the classes were large and teachers did not provide the support that she needed. Eventually, Doris dropped out of high school, but a teacher helped her get a scholarship to attend the Art Institute of Chicago. Because of her inability to read, Doris was too afraid to continue. Acknowledging this failure, she was

determined that one day she would somehow improve her reading. Ten years ago, she was matched with a tutor at Literacy Chicago who inspired her and helped her make great progress. Today, Doris is able to read every sign, poster and announcement at Literacy Chicago and is willing to take on new tasks. She never stopped drawing and now wants to improve her math skills in order to sell her artwork.

Aqlima Haidar — Howard Area Community Center, Chicago

Aqlima and her six-month-old daughter came to the United States from Afghanistan in 2013. Initially, she stayed at home to raise her daughter, and in 2016, she began classes at Howard Area Community Center (HACC). Aqlima had no formal education, but proved to be a diligent, committed learner. She worked with two different tutors on her English-language development and citizenship preparation. She quickly advanced several grade levels, and because of her leadership potential and work ethic, she was promoted to HACC's Peer Leader Council. She was then hired by HACC to provide early childhood instruction and to work with parents in the Family Literacy program.

Juana Martinez — Universidad Popular, Chicago

Juana immigrated to the United States in 1976 and as a young adult, she had difficulty at work, stores and clinics because of her lack of English-language skills. After a major health emergency, she recognized the importance of being able to effectively communicate with others, so she made it her goal to improve her speaking, writing, reading and English comprehension. She and her husband enrolled in Universidad Popular's Learning to Succeed English program, where she has made significant gains and can now communicate with her nurses and doctors. She feels more secure going to stores, restaurants or any place outside her Little Village neighborhood.

Beatriz Navarro — Erie Neighborhood House, Chicago

When Beatriz began at Erie Neighborhood House, she knew very little English, was not employed, nor had money for public transportation. She spent most of her time at home and was not involved in her community. She wanted to improve her English so that she could get a job and help her daughter with schoolwork and medical needs. Beatriz began attending tutoring sessions almost every day and improved rapidly. Last May, she was honored at a student recognition event as Adult Learner of the Year. She now participates in reading clubs, has become a volunteer art teacher at her daughter's school and has started teaching Zumba in local elementary schools. She is now president of the student council at Erie and a member of the agency's board of directors.

Maria Perucho — Tolton Center/De La Salle Institute, Chicago

Maria moved to the United States when she was 25, seeking a better life for her family. Having only completed the sixth grade in Mexico, she enrolled in the Tolton Center's family literacy program to help her better communicate with her supervisor at work. Maria works the second shift at her job and attends English classes daily every morning. She has increased her ability and confidence and is now frequently approached by her supervisor to translate for co-workers.

(cont. on pg. 3)

Sofia Suarez — Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island

When she began at Corazón a Corazón, Sofia's goal was to be able to communicate more effectively with her children's teachers and athletic coaches who do not speak Spanish. With three children, improved communication with others was very important to her. She has since been able to improve her communications to the point that she is able to assist other parents who need help communicating in English. One of her children has special needs and provides Sofia with motivation when she gets discouraged. Sofia also found time to study for the citizenship exam and passed it last fall on her first attempt.

Ariel Wilson — Baby TALK, Decatur

Ariel was very determined to further her education. She began High School Equivalency (HSE) classes when she was expecting a child, but could not continue because she was prescribed bed rest. She had very little support from family and struggled with an unstable housing situation. Through all of these barriers, Ariel persisted, and after each obstacle, she continued to return to Baby TALK's Family Literacy program. She worked hard and completed many lessons at home and now has two young boys to whom she reads and takes to the library. Ariel was able to earn her HSE certificate, has enrolled in cosmetology school and hopes to be great example for her children and her friends.

Maria Wisniewski — Literacy DuPage, Glen Ellyn

Maria emigrated with her family from Poland and had limited opportunities to regularly speak, read or write English. Wanting to improve her English, she sought the help of tutors at Literacy DuPage. She has blossomed during the past year, speaking, reading and writing English. Maria helps translate English instructions to her co-workers and recently read her first novel in English. Maria also participates in an English conversation group at her local public library.

Spotlight on Service Award winner stories:

Jean Araujo — Literacy Chicago, Chicago

Jean is an incredibly dynamic and giving woman who continually goes beyond the call of duty for Literacy Chicago. She has become one of the top volunteer citizenship teachers. Adult learners specifically request to be tutored by Jean because of her patience and compassion. As part of her dedication to the adult learners, she has taken professional development courses, has become very familiar with all aspects of becoming a U.S. citizen, and has created extensive lesson plans for all levels of English-language learners. Jean has helped a number of adult learners earn their citizenship.

Janice Corbett — Corazón a Corazón, Chicago

After retiring from high school teaching in 2009, Janice sought out an opportunity to volunteer and use her knowledge and experience to help others. Along with her degree in education, she has a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate and spent time in Mexico teaching English as a second language (ESL). The experience not only translated into her tutoring, but has also been a benefit to other tutors in the program as she imparts advice and support to help them become more confident when working with their learners.

Shirley Dilley — The Literacy Council, Rockford

Shirley is an exceptional tutor because she encompasses flexibility, patience, creativity and a strong passion to make a difference. An obvious sign of her impact is that in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, her learners all wanted to continue their tutoring sessions via Skype because they

did not want to lose time with her. She is currently working with nine learners and is holding two ESL conversation sessions via Skype. Shirley is very innovative, often incorporating a variety of techniques and materials with her learners depending upon their needs. She goes above and beyond to help her learners no matter the situation.

Dorothea Duncan — Black Hawk College, East Moline

Retiring after teaching school for 23 years and then losing her husband, Dorothea found she had little to do with her time. One day after a neighbor asked for her help to learn English, Dorothea found herself taking the neighbor to Black Hawk College's adult education center and ended up staying as well. Dorothea is a dedicated and reliable volunteer who is creative, responsible and patient. She genuinely cares about not only her students, but all students in the program.

Shawn Finrock — Parkland College, Champaign

Shawn is a dedicated tutor with great ideas and imagination. She always brings fun activities to her tutoring sessions and is dependable as well as inventive and imaginative when it comes to creating lessons and working with her learners. She regularly meets her learners at the library to find books that are of interest to them, and then takes the extra step to find the audiobook so they can listen and read at the same time, solidifying their knowledge.

Susan Jones — Literacy DuPage, Glen Ellyn

Sue came to Literacy DuPage in 2012 after retiring from her private practice law firm. Over the years, she has been a leader in initiating three separate conversation groups, two at Wheaton Public Library and one at West Chicago Public Library. Sue is always looking for creative ways to help her learners and works hard to connect with them on a personal level. Her attitude creates a safe, friendly and warm environment in her conversation groups, often quickly creating something of a support group among the learners.

Barbara Langfeld — Literacy DuPage, Glen Ellyn

Since her arrival at Literacy DuPage in 2014, Barb has been assigned 15 different learners who hail from Mexico, Venezuela, South Korea, India, China, Serbia and Belarus. She cares about each and every one of them and takes the time to get to know each learner. The learners explain to Barbara what they want to achieve and she helps them accomplish their goals in a practical, supportive and methodical manner. She devotes a minimum of nine hours of volunteering a week for one-on-one tutoring and preparation time. She is a true cheerleader of her learners and champions each success and achievement along the way.

Mariela Rodriguez — Howard Area Community Center, Chicago

Mariela came to the United States in 2017 from Venezuela. She studied English as a young adult in Venezuela and continued after moving to the United States. Mariela began at Howard Area Community Center as a student before becoming a tutor. She is interested in pursuing a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certificate in order to continue her education in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) and improve her skills. Mariela adeptly provides early literacy interventions to some of the lower level learners and is very adaptable and resourceful about planning and preparing lessons that are appropriate for the learner.

Rosemary Shiels — Corazón a Corazón, Chicago

Rosemary is a retired professional with an extraordinary background in teaching, law and finance. In 2017, Rosemary stated that she wanted to

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Scholarship winners attend IACEA Conference

The Illinois State Library's Literacy Office awarded 10 scholarships to individuals who work for literacy programs to attend the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association (IACEA) annual conference held in March in Springfield. Applications for the scholarships were received from literacy programs statewide and covered a wide range of staff positions and organizations. Scholarships were awarded to the following individuals:

- Jennifer Brown, HANA Center, Chicago
- Mary Cerutti, World Relief DuPage, Aurora
- Taylor Fox, Kankakee Community College, Kankakee
- Steffen Gordon, Southtown Youth Programs, Mt. Vernon
- Marie Hilst, YWCA, Pekin
- Harry Kent, St. Joseph Services, Chicago
- Lori Koch, YWCA, Pekin
- Addie Placido, Urbana Adult Education, Urbana
- Sheila Vaughn, Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey
- Laura Wickramasinghe, Literacy DuPage, Glen Ellyn

"Continuing education is very important to the career development of literacy practitioners in their service to adult learners," said Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. "My office is proud to provide the opportunity for these individuals to expand their knowledge and incorporate what they learn into making their literacy programs stronger."

Some of the scholarship winners shared what attending the conference meant to them:

Jennifer Brown — "The conference allowed me to see how easy it is to provide an engaging lesson through the use of technology. With distance learning now being a norm, I have been able to develop our online courses with the ideas and tools from this workshop. For me, the most critical lesson learned is that digital literacy should not be feared, but should be understood as a way to make instruction and learning easier."

Mary Cerutti — "The session 'Recruit, Train, and Utilize Volunteer Talent' provided very helpful information for our program. It provided examples of many effective practices for working with volunteers, recruiting volunteers and training volunteers. I was able to learn strategies on how to utilize volunteer talent based on the volunteer's specific skill set. There were many excellent organizations that were represented at the event and each had presentations, demonstrations and provided opportunities to receive helpful information and sample copies of resources."

Taylor Fox — "The lessons learned from the Digital Literacy in ABE/HSE courses session from Harper College has proven itself very useful considering the obstacles we were forced to overcome just days after attending the conference. The session introduced me to different technologies and instructional platforms suitable for our Adult Education department. Not having much experience in the educational field, it was intriguing to hear the different types of engaging techniques teachers can practice with students to keep them interested and willing to learn."

Marie Hilst — "My goal for the conference was to learn some of the strategies that other programs are using to recruit tutors and market their programs. I was successful in learning things to use to help grow our program. My favorite session covered teaching English pronunciation by using a rubber band to teach emphasis. I have already incorporated that method and the information I learned in to our program's tutor training."

Harry Kent — "It was certainly a surreal experience attending the IACEA conference during the initial stages of the COVID-19 epidemic, but the information provided was very helpful for the transition to offsite programming and brainstorming future ideas. Even the theme itself, 'All In,' was significant as a reminder of the work that lay ahead. I received valuable information from the sessions because programs offered their experiences on projects that they had implemented. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend, especially given it may be one of the last times that so many of us are able to gather together and share experiences in person."

Sheila Vaughn — "I was able to stretch my understanding of volunteer service and the importance of treating tutors as equals to include inviting them to participate in professional development sessions alongside our program staff. Thank you for providing me with this scholarship which allowed me to attend the conference, where every presentation supplied me with ideas to bring back to our team."

Laura Wickramasinghe — "The IACEA Conference gave me the opportunity to expand my knowledge of adult education, connect with other programs and gain insight into steps that my organization can take to reach more learners. I was able to put a lot of faces to names and learn a lot of new information. I have already been able to apply what I have learned about learning theories and promoting higher order thinking to support our tutors and workplace instructors."



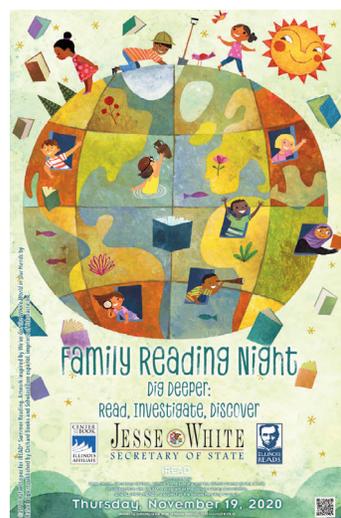
Pictured are the 2020 scholarship winners.

volunteer at Corazón a Corazón because she knew the importance of educating fellow community members in order to help improve not only her community, but her country. Her energetic and vibrant personality helps her learners come out of their shells. They appreciate Rosemary's patience, positivity and resourcefulness. Rosemary practices speaking skills and conversations with her learners on various topics, making for interesting and helpful tutoring sessions. She focuses on her learners' goals and believes there is never an achievement that is too small to celebrate.

Mary Uhrick — Oakton Community College, Skokie

Mary specializes in working with low-level learners. She does a wonderful job teaching from the textbook, but always goes above and beyond the provided curriculum. She searches for supplemental materials to help familiarize students with American culture, English grammar, speech and writing. Mary has created her own collection of materials, sometimes using learners' names in the exercises. She develops a safe environment for students, allowing them to feel comfortable asking her about vocabulary and customs that they encounter in their daily lives.

Celebrate Family Reading Night on November 19



Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White encourages families to read together to celebrate Illinois' annual Family Reading Night (FRN) on Thursday, Nov. 19.

"As school children and parents adjust to at-home learning, it is imperative that time be taken to read together for enjoyment," White said. "Reading together creates a positive learning environment and will help children develop language skills, comprehension and a love for reading that can last a lifetime."

The Illinois Library Association's iREAD theme is "Dig Deeper: Read,

Investigate, Discover." The Illinois State Library will distribute thousands of colorful posters and bookmarks to libraries, schools and literacy programs across the state to promote FRN.

This year marks the 29th year that the Secretary of State's office has sponsored FRN. For additional information about FRN, along with ideas on celebrating the event at home, visit: https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/center_for_the_book/frn.html or contact Bonnie Matheis, coordinator of the Illinois Center for the Book, at bmatheis@ilsos.gov.

To subscribe to *Illinois Literacy*, call 217-785-6921 or 800-665-5576 (Illinois only), #3.

ON THE HORIZON

- **October** — Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- **October 3-29** — International Literacy Association Virtual Conference, <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/ila-next#ila-2020>
- **October 20-22** — Illinois Library Association Virtual Conference, <https://www.ila.org/events/annual-conference>
- **October 27-30** — American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Virtual Conference, <https://www.aaace.org/page/2020Virtual>
- **November 13-14** — International Dyslexia Association Reading Literacy & Learning Virtual Conference, <https://or.dyslexiaida.org/event/ida-annual-conference-2020/>
- **November 19** — Family Reading Night, the theme for 2020 is "Dig Deeper: Read, Investigate, Discover"
- **November 22-24** — National Council of Teachers of English Virtual Conference, <https://www2.ncte.org/groups/cel/convention/>
- **December 2-5** — Literacy Research Association Virtual Conference, <https://www.literacyresearchassociation.org/annual-conference>
- **December 3-4** — Northern Illinois Adult Education Virtual Conference, <https://alrc.thecenterweb.org/>

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

WWW



<https://edtech.worlded.org/tips-for-distance-learning/>

This page provides essential information and resources to help rapidly scale-up or start distance education.

<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/computers/>

This website provides a series of tutorials on becoming comfortable with computer technology.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKpRxBfeD1kEM_I1ld3N_XI77fKDzSXe

With most schools and literacy organizations conducting distance learning and tutoring online, this link offers tutorials on ZOOM, one of today's most used online meeting platforms.

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