Last November, literacy programs, libraries, schools and families throughout Illinois celebrated Family Reading Night. Despite complications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the activities planned were adapted to follow safety protocols. Programs and families overcame these obstacles and had a successful Family Reading Night.

This spring, I encourage you to use National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, as an opportunity to recognize the volunteer tutors in your program. These individuals have accepted the challenge to dedicate their time and talents to change the lives of adult learners. They have stayed committed to this challenge while facing a quickly changing landscape of remote learning and teaching. I would like to personally recognize their efforts and offer my sincere gratitude for all they do for their fellow neighbors.

Summer is quickly approaching, and I would like to remind families to participate in a local summer reading program. Statistics have proven that children who participate in summer reading are much more prepared at the start of the next school year.

Thank you for your efforts to promote literacy in Illinois.

Jesse White
Secretary of State & State Librarian

Recognize volunteers during National Volunteer Week in April

Across Illinois, literacy programs are dependent upon the generosity of individuals who donate their time and talents to adult learners. One such volunteer is Mary Ann Wagner, who has been tutoring at the Dominican Literacy Center since 2005. Mary spends one day a week tutoring her students at the center. The adult learners range in age, reading level and even language spoken, yet all progress under her patient teaching. She has an intellectual curiosity that fuels her conversations with her students, and provides them with an array of vocabulary words for them to learn and practice. Mary Ann’s dedication to her students has benefited more than three dozen students during her time volunteering at the center.

According to the Independent Sector, volunteer service equates to $27.98 per hour in Illinois. In 2020, volunteer tutors provided a value of more than $4.5 million of service hours to Secretary of State’s Adult Volunteer Literacy Grant Programs.

For information on the annual celebration, along with ideas for recognizing your volunteers, visit the Points of Light website at https://www.pointsoflight.org (click Events). For additional information on volunteering at an Illinois literacy program or to refer potential adult learners, please call the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline at 800-321-9511 or visit https://AdultLearningHotline.org.

Celebrate Service
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK
April 18-24
Honoring Spotlight on Service Award winners

Last fall, 10 volunteer tutors who participate in Illinois literacy programs received the Spotlight on Service Award from Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. Due to restrictions involving the COVID-19 pandemic, an in-person ceremony at the Illinois State Library could not be held.

“I am proud to recognize these outstanding volunteer tutors for their generosity and encouragement in helping literacy students achieve their highest potential,” said White. Each winner was presented an award by his or her sponsoring literacy agency. Pictured are a few of the winners receiving their plaques.

The 2020 Spotlight on Service Award winners were:

- Jean Araujo, Literacy Chicago — Chicago
- Jan Corbett, Corazon a Corazon — Blue Island
- Shirley M. Dilley, The Literacy Council — Rockford
- Dorothea Duncan, Black Hawk College — East Moline
- Shawn Renee Finfrock, Parkland College — Champaign
- Sue Jones, Literacy DuPage — Glen Ellyn
- Barbara Langfeld, Literacy DuPage — Glen Ellyn
- Mariela Rodriguez, Howard Area Community Center — Chicago
- Rosemary Shiels, Corazon a Corazon — Blue Island
- Mary V. Uhrick, Oakton Community College — Skokie

Family Reading Night 2020

Literacy programs, libraries, schools and families throughout the state took part in Family Reading Night (FRN) activities in November, incorporating the theme “Dig Deeper: Read, Investigate, Discover.” The annual event, in its 27th year, provided all of the organizations with a challenging night of arranging and conducting activities remotely to follow COVID-19 restrictions. The following are some of the activities that took place.

YWCA Family Literacy Program — Elgin

In the weeks leading up to the event, families made a book together for FRN. The families read their homemade book as a family and chose additional books to read throughout the night. Some families checked out books from their local library, while others read books from their mini home library, which were given to all families as part of the YWCA’s literacy program. The following week, families shared pictures and stories specific to their FRN experiences. Although the night was markedly different from past FRN events, it still proved to have a positive impact on all involved.
Heartland Human Care Services Family Literacy Program — Chicago

The program gave families the option for an at-home celebration using Zoom. Instructors guided the children in creating their own books that dealt with basic human emotions. The children were then instructed to draw a picture on each page that made them feel happy, excited, surprised, sad, angry, afraid and guilty. Parents then wrote down sentences for each expression describing the picture and emotion represented. The children colored the pictures and spent the evening reading their books along with other books while enjoying a snack.

Macomb Public Library District

The library celebrated FRN by placing family reading kits on the front railing of the library for pickup. The kits contained a free book, microwave popcorn, a craft kit and other fun surprises. The kits were labeled with a suggested age range to help families get a book that was developmentally appropriate for their children. The library also posted a special FRN story time on its YouTube channel, a guide on its blog and links to both on its Facebook page.

Culver School — Niles School District 71

The school hosted 15 remote read-aloud sessions for students who picked three titles from a variety of fiction and nonfiction books, and then listened as 20 volunteers read different selections via Zoom. Approximately 80 students from preschool through eighth grade participated in the celebration with each receiving a copy of the book they liked best.

Higareda family — Chicago

The Higareda children love listening to stories and reading books, especially their favorite book, Ten Jolly Pirates. They like to say which pirate each family member would be if they were in the book. Their 5-year-old daughter is attending Peace of Children School and is learning to read. She is always excited to read to her baby brother when at home. The school was instrumental in promoting FRN to all of the students and families.

Multiple ways to connect with the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline

The Illinois Adult Learning Hotline provides referral services for students, volunteers and employers wishing to access adult education and literacy programs throughout Illinois. Operators speak English, Spanish and Polish. Hotline hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Messages can be left after hours and calls will be returned the next business day. Prospective adult learners and tutors may call or text the hotline at 800-321-9511. Interested individuals can find out more information by visiting the website at https://AdultLearningHotline.org. The website also offers the option of an online chat with an operator. Connect with the hotline by visiting its Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/ILAdultLearningHotline.
Gear up for summer reading!

Summer is just around the corner, so plan to promote summer reading to adult learners and family literacy participants to help avoid summer learning loss, also known as the “summer slide.” The benefits of summer reading are clear, as national research shows that children who participate in summer reading programs achieve higher scores on reading tests at the beginning of the next school year than those who did not participate.

The theme for the Illinois Library Association’s (ILA) iRead 2021 summer reading program is Reading Colors Your World. “Colors” provides a context for exploring humanity, nature, culture and science, as well as developing programing that demonstrates how libraries and reading can expand your world through kindness, growth and community.

For ideas on conducting a summer reading program along with a myriad of resources that follow this summer’s theme, visit https://www.ireadprogram.org.

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**ON THE HORIZON**

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

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

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