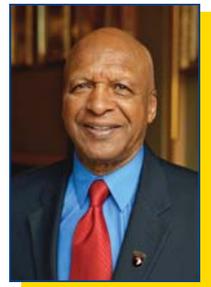


ILLINOIS LITERACY SUMMER 2018

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

Summer is the perfect time of year to reignite a love of reading and recognize those individuals who energize their community through literacy. I had the pleasure of honoring 10 individuals who advocate literacy at the annual Spotlight Awards ceremony. These honorees volunteer their time and talents to help adults learn to read, write and speak English so they are better able to succeed in both their careers and personal lives. I also had the privilege to recognize 10 participants who took the brave step to better their lives through education. These adult learners each persevered through hardships to accomplish their goals. I am proud to share the inspiring stories of both the volunteers and the adult learners in this issue.



Remember to encourage your adult learners and children to stay engaged in reading and learning by participating in a summer reading program at your local public library. I urge literacy programs to partner with libraries in promoting summer reading.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State & State Librarian

2018 Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards



Secretary White addresses the Spotlight Awards recipients at the 2018 ceremony at the Illinois State Library.

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White honored the winners of the 2018 Spotlight on Achievement and Service Awards in May. Spotlight Achievement Awards are presented to adult learners who have demonstrated tremendous progress as they worked to improve their reading and writing skills or to learn the English language. Spotlight on Service Awards are presented to 10 volunteers who have shown great dedication as they assisted adult learners to reach their goals.

"I am honored to congratulate and recognize these outstanding adult learners for their hard work and determination to attain lifelong reading and learning skills," said Secretary White. "I am also proud to recognize the outstanding volunteer tutors for their selflessness and encouragement in helping adult learners achieve their utmost potential."

This year, 89 programs that support adult, family and workplace literacy programs are operating with funding from the Illinois State Library's Adult Literacy Grant Program. Last year, literacy programs served 5,941 adult students, and 3,278 tutors volunteered to instruct students.

At the ceremony, Secretary White presented each winner with a commemorative plaque and a personalized Illinois Blue Book. The following stories are highlights of the winners' experiences.

Spotlight on Achievement winners:

Jaqueline "Susy" Aparicio and Darwin Amaya – YWCA, Pekin

Susy came to the U.S. alone and pregnant, leaving behind her husband, Darwin, and young daughter, Sophia. With the help of a member of her church and a tutor, Susy was able to navigate currency and the U.S. healthcare system. Darwin, Sophia and Susy's younger sister arrived in the U.S. more

(Cont. on pg. 2)

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2018 Spotlight on Achievement Winners — Standing left to right: Secretary White; Maria G. Bazan Guillen, Corazón a Corazón, Chicago; Michelle Hernandez, Howard Area Community Center, Chicago; Martha Reyes, Joliet Junior College, Joliet; Eugene Street, The Literacy Council, Rockford; Ruben Vega, Morton College, Cicero; Adriana Zarate, PODER Learning Center, Chicago; and Greg McCormick, deputy director, Illinois State Library. Seated left to right: Lourdes Castelan, Literacy DuPage, Naperville; Deborah Buckner, Baby TALK, Decatur; Rogelio Arce, Literacy Chicago, Chicago; and Jaqueline Aparicio and Darwin Amaya, YWCA, Pekin.

than a year later. Susy and Darwin both work full time on opposite shifts to ensure that a parent is home with their children. They have increased their ability to read, speak and understand English. Darwin obtained his driver's license and green card and has secured employment at a local company. Susy and Darwin have made positive changes to their lives as a result of participating in the YWCA's literacy program. They firmly believe learning the language is important to being a citizen and is crucial in fulfilling their dreams and goals.

Rogelio Arce – Literacy Chicago, Chicago

After living in the U.S. for many years, Rogelio decided to become a citizen. When he first visited Literacy Chicago to sign up for citizenship classes and language assistance, he could not speak one word of English. Rogelio received little education in his native country of Mexico and was not literate in his native language. When he began his tutoring sessions, he would learn words simultaneously in Spanish and English. He met with a tutor twice a week in addition to his regular class. He studied English diligently and after nearly a year of tutoring, he was granted an interview with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. He was allowed to have an interpreter for the interview, so he was accompanied by his English-speaking daughter. Rogelio breezed through the interview and passed the history test with flying colors.

It was the first time his daughter had heard him speak in English. Soon thereafter, Rogelio was sworn in as a U.S. citizen.

Deborah A. Buckner – Baby TALK, Decatur

When Deborah began the program at Baby TALK, she lacked confidence and questioned her ability to reach her goal of obtaining a high school equivalency certificate. She also doubted her chances to ever enroll in a college. Deborah did not want to raise her child on government assistance, so she found strength and motivation to succeed. She progressed from a fifth-grade reading level to a 12th-grade reading level and received her high school equivalency certificate. She plans to seek a college degree and is proud of her accomplishments. Building her literacy skills has increased her confidence and enriched her family.

Lourdes Castelan – Literacy DuPage, Naperville

Lourdes came to the U.S. from Mexico 25 years ago. She met her husband and had five children. She was determined to be an active participant in her children's education, so she decided to improve her English-language skills. Although her family members were all U.S. citizens, she was not and was firm in her desire to become a citizen. She turned to Literacy DuPage for guidance. With assistance from her tutor, she began working on her English skills and studying U.S. history,

government and geography. Her hard work paid off in the spring of 2017 when Lourdes became a U.S. citizen. Her life has changed for the better, and she feels more confident speaking English in public. She is involved with her children's school and their homework and encourages her friends to learn to speak English. In the future, she aspires to take classes at her local community college. Lourdes wants her children to know the value of hard work and that an education is one of the most important gifts you can give yourself.

Maria G. Bazan Guillen – Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island

Maria had many responsibilities that could have prevented her from improving her knowledge of the English language. She worked two jobs and acted as a caregiver to her parents. Maria learned to manage her time well and never missed a tutoring session. She wanted to be comfortable when she found herself in situations where she could only communicate in English. Through her study of English, Maria gained confidence and the ability to speak clearly, read proficiently and understand dialogue. When dining out, she is able to read and understand the menu and place her order without any assistance. She is better able to interact with doctors and understand their recommendations.

Michelle Hernandez – Howard Area Community Center, Chicago

When Michelle first started in the program at Howard Area Community Center, she lacked confidence and a sense of direction. She began to invest in her education and saw results. She decided to become more active in her children's education and also desired a high school equivalency certificate. Her son and brother struggle with disabilities that compound the responsibilities and stress of Michelle's daily life. Rather than allowing these challenges to discourage her, she became a fierce advocate for her family and has fought for early intervention and accommodations for both disabled family members. She has persisted in her studies and made great strides toward her literacy goals with the support of her tutor, Edward Schultz – a Spotlight on Service Award recipient. One of her favorite learning exercises is reading theatrical plays with her tutor. She enjoys his explanation of how everything would look on the stage and loves imagining what it would be like to be a different person in these different places. In the last year, she has taken on a leadership role in her community, has proactively managed her finances and has enrolled in employment classes.

Martha Reyes – Joliet Junior College, Joliet

Martha wanted to increase her English reading and speaking ability in an effort to better communicate at her two jobs and with her two sons. Her children were born in this country. "They speak Spanish the way I used to speak English," Martha explains. She discovered the tutoring program at Joliet Junior College; but the tutoring sessions had to align with her work schedules. One employer would not allow her the hour off for tutoring, so she made the difficult decision to sacrifice the income and stability of that job in favor of her education. Martha's family supports her educational efforts. She has worked diligently on her literacy and has had significant increases in her reading scores. Martha feels capable of communicating with family, friends and co-workers. Most importantly, Martha has improved relationships with her family life because she better understands her sons. With part of her dreams accomplished, she plans to enroll in high school equivalency certificate classes.

(Cont. on pg. 4)

On the Road to Literacy 27th annual conference



Illinois State Library Literacy Office staff member Irene Williams provides information to participants at the 27th annual On the Road to Literacy Conference.

The 27th annual On the Road to Literacy Conference was held in April at the University of Illinois-Chicago, hosting more than 200 adult literacy students and volunteer tutors. The conference included 22 different workshops presented by various literacy programs and universities that covered a wide range of topics ranging from using technology for language learning to empowering immigrant women.

Peter Waite, Ph.D., executive vice president of Proliteracy Worldwide, was the keynote speaker. He has spent over 25 years in literacy and currently works extensively with volunteer literacy programs. Waite also focuses on the advancement of public policies relating to adult literacy.

In his remarks, he provided an overview of the current status of adult literacy in the U.S. and addressed the national movement of advocating for adult education. He encouraged literacy programs and tutors to stay true to the needs of their learners, while applauding adult learners for their efforts and perseverance to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

Following the keynote speech, awards were given to 11 individuals recognized as outstanding tutors. The Tutor of the Year Award was presented to Diksha J. Bhatia of the Midwest Asian American Center. Also honored with the conference's Literacy Legacy Award was June Porter, who recently retired following 29 years of service with Literacy Chicago. In her honor, the conference has created an annual award for the top adult learner. The inaugural June C. Porter Student is at the Top Award was presented to Harold Barnes, a student at Literacy Chicago.

Photographs of all of the award winners, as well as a listing of the conference sessions and presenters, can be found at the Literacy Volunteers of Illinois web-site: http://lvillinois.org/otr_2015_thank_you1.aspx.





2018 Spotlight on Service Winners — Standing left to right: Secretary White; Phil Hjemboe, The Literacy Council, Rockford; John Ostergren, Oakton Community College, Skokie; Seamus Doyle, South-East Asia Center, Chicago, accepting on behalf of Sarah Poontong; Moon Parker, Howard Area Community Center, Chicago, accepting on behalf of Edward Schultz; Marti Vandervest, Oakton Community College, Skokie; and Greg McCormick, deputy director, Illinois State Library. Seated left to right: Kate Adams, Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Chicago; David Allen, Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey; Marlene Delaney, Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights; Shelly Hanson, The Hana Center, Chicago; and Marlene Greenberg, Township High School District 214.

Eugene Street – The Literacy Council, Rockford

Eugene had a simple goal: to be able to read to his grandson. Eugene is severely dyslexic and his upbringing in the segregated South did not provide him with special education services. With the use of specialized dyslexia education strategies and repeated readings, he has learned to cope with his learning disorder. Eugene now reads at a second-grade level and is capable of reading simple stories to his grandson. He operates his own lawn care business and with the help of his tutor has developed bid and estimate forms. Eugene is active at his grandson’s school and looks forward to participating in events. After suffering from health issues last summer, he returned to sessions with his tutor in a matter of weeks. Eugene feels that tutoring has aided his focus and comprehension. He can read stories and better understand their meaning. He says that learning new words and reading has made him a better grandpa.

Ruben Vega – Morton College, Cicero

When Ruben arrived in the United States, his English skills were limited. Initially, he had not planned on staying in the U.S., but he met his wife and they started a family. They lived in a predominantly Spanish-speaking community, and he worked in an environment where his co-workers spoke languages other than English. When he retired in 2015, he decided to take the time to learn English. Ruben only completed six grades of schooling in his native country, which

made learning English even more challenging. Ruben overcame his fear with the assistance of his tutor and fellow students. He regularly participates in program activities and has become an involved member of his community. Prior to participating in the literacy program, he was not comfortable answering the phone or talking with his English-speaking neighbors. Now he is confident going to a grocery store or talking with his doctor on the phone. He also understands his English-speaking friends and loves to practice speaking with his grandchildren.

Adriana Zarate – PODER Learning Center, Chicago

Growing up in Mexico, Adriana’s family and work were her priorities. She earned a bachelor’s degree in law and was accustomed to being surrounded by people who shared common interests. When she moved to Chicago, she realized that she needed to become more involved in her new culture. Her mother, who had previously attended PODER Learning Center, encouraged her to attend. Adriana quickly stood out as an extremely dedicated and focused student and was hired into a receptionist/data entry position at PODER. She signed up for a library card and has enrolled in workshops on interviewing and improving customer service skills. Her long-term goal is to attend college and secure a job related to her degree. Adriana learned that if she invests time and energy into her academic and personal development, she is concurrently investing in a better quality of life for herself and her family.

Spotlight on Service winners:

Kate Adams – Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Chicago

Kate wanted to use her free time to help students in need, so she began tutoring on Saturday mornings at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association. She has extensive experience as a professional ESL instructor and as a writing tutor, but she also has a strong interest in teaching literacy and empowering women. While she knew she wanted to specifically help women, she also wanted to work with others who shared her desire to help others. Kate never realized how much of an effect she could have on adult learners until she began tutoring. She learned that women immigrants are often the family caretakers and they frequently feel isolated by the responsibilities of taking care of a home and children. They often come to the U.S. with little formal education, and the needs of the family take precedent over their own education. Kate's knowledge of how to help adult ESL learners who have low-literacy skills has been extremely valuable to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association.

David Allen – Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey

David has been tutoring adult learners at Lewis and Clark since 1987. He meets with his learners multiple times a week in a neighborhood that is one of the poorest, high-crime areas of Alton. David uses books he purchases himself when tutoring because he likes their strong emphasis on phonics and basic grammar, which he believes is perfect for struggling readers. He is consistently matched with some of the program's lowest readers who are frequently troubled by poverty, insecure housing circumstances and a host of other pressing issues. He is well-known for his willingness to give multiple opportunities to learners who had poor attendance or no discernible learning gains. Program staff implicitly trusts him with the lowest, most challenged and often most vulnerable learners because of his patient, thorough and flexible teaching style.

Marlene Delaney – Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights

Marlene knows what it is like to overcome obstacles and persevere through difficult times. In 2009, her husband passed away and soon after, both of her children left for college. She felt it was not healthy for her job to be the only activity in her life. While she had no experience in teaching English, she saw an ad in a local community education catalog looking for tutors to work with adults needing to learn English. Marlene soon began volunteering, and it was the start of a life-changing experience. Marlene is compassionate, patient and sincerely cares about the success of her adult learners. One of her greatest contributions to the program was volunteering to facilitate the program's first book club utilizing the Secretary of State Adult New Readers Book Club collection. Marlene shares her personal struggles and challenges with her students and encourages a safe environment where adult learners can speak freely without feeling self-conscious about their language barriers.

Marlene Greenberg – Township High School District 214 Community Education, Arlington Heights

Growing up, Marlene was raised by grandparents who could not speak or read English. Acting as their interpreter, she wrote notes for the

milkman, which her grandmother then copied. In a sense, Marlene has been a tutor all of her life. After raising her family and the loss of her husband, she recalled her grandparent's struggles and felt the best contribution she could make in this world would be to volunteer as an adult literacy tutor. Marlene has devoted 20 years to tutoring adult learners, and her passion speaks volumes to her extraordinary dedication. As her 85th birthday approaches, she warmly recalls how she innocently walked into the Palatine Library to "help" one day and how that started a 20-year journey of helping others. Marlene takes tutoring beyond the classroom and supplements her lesson plans with materials, such as menus from restaurants and medical forms. She role plays with her students to help them with potential day-to-day experiences. As of this past December, Marlene has tutored almost 800 hours. She also spends extra time researching topics and communicating with her students outside the classroom.

Shelly Hanson – The Hana Center, Chicago

Shelly believes all learners are unique and have something special that they can bring to their own education. Learners deserve the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings no matter their age or literacy level. Shelly serves as a volunteer tutor, bringing opportunity and joy to adult ESL learners who have less mobility and interactions with others. She designs lessons based on the needs of her students so that they may better express themselves in difficult situations, such as illness, death of a family member or loneliness. She pushes learners to reach beyond their comfort level and discuss their opinions and emotions on American culture, current events and daily experiences. She empowers learners by teaching them to utilize free resources, including those that learners can practice daily on their own time. She provides emotional support by making herself available and attentively listening when learners open up and trust her with difficult personal stories. She believes to learn a new language is to learn a new way to think about the world.

Phil Hjemboe – The Literacy Council, Rockford

Phil has been tutoring for nearly 20 years and has made a significant difference in the lives of each of his adult learners. His background is in education, first as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia, then as an elementary school teacher and later as a college librarian. Returning to Rockford in 1998, Phil sought out volunteer opportunities in the community and found The Literacy Council. He works almost entirely with ESL learners and views tutoring as his chance to be a part of something important for both the individual learners and the community. Phil does not shy away from anything he thinks would help his learners and goes above and beyond to help them, even after program completion. His learners recruit their friends and family to sign up for literacy help. He believes tutoring provides a rewarding way to teach. Phil has dedicated more than 1,500 tutoring hours to adult learners.

John Ostergren – Oakton Community College, Skokie

John began tutoring for Oakton Community College's VITA program in 2004. He also tutors at the Des Plaines Public Library because "I wanted to do something worthwhile with my life, something that would help people." He also firmly believes that the ability to read, write and

(Cont. on pg. 6)

speak the language of the country where an individual lives is almost as basic a necessity as food, shelter and clothing. He comes to each session with unparalleled enthusiasm, meticulously planned lessons and a great sense of humor. His unwavering commitment to tutoring was never as evident as when he was diagnosed with cancer, yet never missed a tutoring session throughout his lengthy treatment. John will meet with students on his own if they need a little extra help and in one instance, it took the form of skydiving. When one of his students suffered a great personal loss, he encouraged her to realize her dream of skydiving as a way of healing. John was with her when she made that dream a reality and took the plunge himself.

Sarah Pontong – South-East Asia Center, Chicago

After working in fundraising and corporate development, Sarah decided to change her career and devote time at the South-East Asia Center. Sarah's passion for teaching English and working with new citizens to help them adapt and thrive inspires both the volunteers and staff. As an immigrant, Sarah feels it is important to help other immigrants and non-English speaking individuals with language acquisition. She has never forgotten her own family's struggle when arriving in this country. Despite not being a teacher by trade, she has dedicated herself to developing teaching methods, adjusting curriculum to learner's needs and catering to an individual's learning level. Sarah has helped build bridges across cultural and social lines in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago. She is most rewarded by seeing progress in her learners and the ownership they take of their education.

Edward Schultz – Howard Area Community Center, Chicago

In the not so distant past, Aline Schultz suggested to her husband, Ed, that he become a volunteer tutor with her at Howard Area Community Center. Nervous and fresh from his tutor training, he met his first adult learner, Michelle Hernandez. Ed's nerves soon vanished as he quickly discovered Michelle was an enterprising student delicately balancing her priorities of being a mother of three school-age children and playing a major role in caring for other members of her family. He quickly applied innovative techniques that employed his theatrical skills to literacy lessons and used plays to engage Michelle. The dedication of Ed's and Michelle's efforts were recognized this year when each were honored with Spotlight awards. Ed is committed to continued sessions with Michelle to assist in her goal of obtaining a high school equivalency certificate.

Marti Vandervest – Oakton Community College, Skokie

Prior to volunteering as a literacy tutor 10 years ago, Marti would not have considered the word "passionate" when describing herself. Now she will contend that tutoring is her passion. She quickly discovered the joy of interacting with adult learners and feels she is helping them learn more than just school lessons. Marti incorporates a patient tutoring style and teaches multiple learners with similar ability levels, but differing literacy needs. Her devotion to the program and to her adult learners is strong and steady. She enjoys experiencing the successes of her learners and was astonished that some of her learners did not understand the concept of volunteering as it was not customary in their own countries. Because of Marti, they now want to do volunteer work.

ON THE HORIZON

- **July 20-23** – International Literacy Association Annual Conference, Austin, TX, <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/conference>
- **Aug. 15** – Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration, Chicago, <http://www.icova.info>
- **September** – National Literacy Month
- **Sept. 8** – International Literacy Day, <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/meetings-events/international-literacy-day>
- **Sept. 24-26** – Families Learning Conference, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, <http://www.conference.familieslearning.org>
- **Sept. 24-29** – National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, <https://national-coalition-literacy.org/adult-education-and-family-literacy-week/>
- **September 25-26** – Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support, Forum for Excellence, Normal, <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/pd/forum-for-excellence>
- **Oct. 4-6** – Illinois Reading Council Conference, Peoria, <http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/conference.html>

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

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