

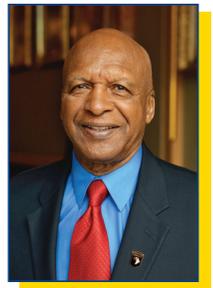
LITERACY

WINTER
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ILLINOIS

Jesse White
Secretary of State
& State Librarian

As we all struggle daily with staying healthy and safe during this pandemic, I would like to recognize all the adult literacy program volunteers throughout the state who continue to provide services to those who need it the most. They have been able to adapt and incorporate many different approaches to delivering instruction to adult learners and are to be commended for their dedication and ingenuity.



In this issue, we explain the services that my office's grant program provided last year to adults in Illinois who score below the ninth-grade level in reading, writing or math, or speak English below the Student Performance Level 7. The success stories of the featured participants are remarkable and serve as an example of what can be accomplished through education.

Volunteer tutors play a significant role in the success of our program. These selfless individuals not only serve as teachers, but also become friends and confidants to adult learners. Read the heartwarming stories about how two tutors and their adult learners form the kind of friendships that can develop when individuals work toward a common goal.

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Adapting during the pandemic



Tutor Beth Lordan (left) with adult learner Ibrahim Tarawalie (right) meet safely during a tutoring session at the John A. Logan College in Carterville.

What makes the Illinois State Library Adult Volunteer Literacy Grant Program unique and successful is the one-to-one tutoring of adult learners. The tutoring requires tutors and learners to be close in proximity and in direct communication. The current pandemic has created a challenging landscape for literacy programs to continue to provide services to adult learners while protecting the tutors' and learners' health and safety. Literacy programs around the state have risen to the challenge and quickly put in place several different alternatives to help learning continue uninterrupted. The following are some examples of how programs are adapting and overcoming the obstacles created by the pandemic.

John A. Logan College, Carterville – To allow tutors and learners to participate in tutoring sessions in the safest manner, John A. Logan College offers multiple options for tutor pairs. Practicing good safety measures, face-to-face tutoring is conducted with a plexiglass shield separating the tutor and the adult learner. A variety of online tutoring options are also available. Training to become a tutor is also now being offered online.

Parkland College, Urbana – A site coordinator made a Prezi presentation to show how to administer the English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (ESLOA1) via Zoom, WhatsApp and Facetime. The only requirement is a score sheet that can be downloaded at <https://www.newreaderspress.com/esloa>. The Prezi link is <https://prezi.com/view/XgGy3ikuCbLukVKE3VAf>.

South-East Asia Center, Chicago – Staff indicates that increased communication using email, phone and Zoom has been effective in maintaining relationships with tutors and learners. They are now using Google Forms for tracking tutoring hours and have added multiple tutor training resources for teaching remotely (i.e., Literacy Works, Adult Learning Resource Center and Minnesota Literacy Council).

TEACH, La Grange Park – For tutors and learners, Tutoring English to Advance Change (TEACH) has adapted its intake process to be conducted remotely and now provides individualized technology training based on skill level. A YouTube channel was established to cover topics such as creating a Gmail account, using Google Drive and how to access vital support services. Check it out at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCID3V_zjr1h6KP3iE0YsDUA/featured.

FY 2020 Literacy Program statistics and success stories



Prior to the pandemic, a volunteer tutor works with adult learners at a Secretary of State Illinois State Library funded adult volunteer literacy program.

Fiscal year 2020 reports submitted by programs funded through the Secretary of State Illinois State Library Literacy Office revealed the following statistics.

Adult Volunteer Literacy

- 9,264 adult learners served
- Average age of an adult learner was 41
- 65% of adult learners were studying English as a Second Language (ESL)
- 4,242 volunteer tutors provided services to adult learners
- Average age of volunteer tutors was 55
- At \$27.98 per volunteer hour for Illinois, the total-dollar value contributed by volunteer tutors was \$4,504,872, according to the charitable community group Independent Sector.

Success Story: D'Estee, Incorporated, Chicago

An 82-year-old adult learner came to D'Estee five years ago seeking help with her reading. She wanted to be able to help her grandchildren with their homework. Staff at D'Estee gave her an intake assessment and discovered that she was reading below the first-grade level and would need some specific help in her instruction. She explained that she grew up in the South and worked on the family farm and never attended school. She was eager to attend tutoring and was soon matched with a tutor. She was excited about learning and requested to attend tutoring daily, but the program only offered services three days a week. She proved to be a tireless worker, and despite struggling at times, she never gave up. She is now reading above the fifth-grade level and is able to retain the knowledge from her lessons. She brought her two grandchildren to the yearly recognition banquet and delivered a reading that she and her tutor had worked on during instruction. There was not a dry eye in the crowd when she finished, as it touched everyone's hearts and highlighted her accomplishments. She continues to attend tutoring and serves as an example to others that it is never too late in life to learn.

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or 800-665-5576 (Illinois only), #3.

Penny Severns Family Literacy

- 674 adult learners served
- 88% of the adults were female
- 80% were adult learners studying ESL
- Average age of an adult learner was 34
- 335 participants obtained a library card
- 930 children served
- Average age of children served was 6

Success Story: Universidad Popular, Chicago

A father who worked at a restaurant was having a difficult time at work and at home. Due to his limited English-language ability, his opportunities to advance at work were diminished. Helping his children with their homework also proved to be problematic. He visited the Chicago Public Library's West Lawn Branch and was invited to participate in the Families Learning to Teach (FLT) program at Universidad Popular (UP). He immediately joined the program and became an active participant. His goals were to become a waiter and have the ability to take orders, as well as to communicate with the customers. He also wanted to help his children and to communicate with them more. His wife worked during the day, so he cared for the children in the morning. He prepared breakfast, took them to school and attended classes at UP. He made every effort to accomplish his goals in a short period. He enjoyed helping his children with their homework, and he borrowed books at least twice a week from the library. Reading to his children has become his favorite activity. Through a parenting skills topic, "How to Prepare for Your Child's Parent-Teacher Conference," he readied himself to speak with his children's teachers without an interpreter and was able to interact with and understand the teachers. At the beginning of COVID-19, he was reluctant to use technology to attend class, but he knew that it was important for him and his children. He asked the facilitator for support to learn to use applications on the web. He has since been attending classes online and helping his children with their online homework. He has significantly improved his reading, writing and speaking ability, and has become comfortable engaging customers in conversation. His improvement led to a work promotion as a waiter.

Workplace Skills Enhancement

- 339 employees received instruction
- 53% of employees instructed were female
- Average age of an employee was 42.5
- 86% of employees studied ESL

Success Story: Rukel Management LLC, AJR Filtration, St. Charles; World Relief, Aurora

AJR Filtration is an industry-leading manufacturer of high-quality engineered dust and liquid filtration products with sales worldwide. The company is a family-owned business that recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and takes personal pride in superior customer service. The company has been designated an essential business during the COVID-19 pandemic and increased the productions of its line of medical products to support the needs of hospitals and medical care facilities. The increased production, in conjunction with the restrictions of in-person contact, spurred the company and World Relief to adapt the project from in-person instruction to remote instruction. Initially, the logistics of remote instruction/learning were

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challenging, but the commitment by the company to continue providing literacy instruction to its employees during the pandemic exhibits a strong dedication to its workforce.

The company states that it has seen great professional and personal growth among employees who participated in the program. Its objective was to give employees the opportunity to learn and improve their English-language capabilities. The program met this goal, and the results are demonstrated in the number of employee promotions, as well as participation in the program. It has given participants the courage to apply for higher positions within the company. Employee feedback on the program is positive, and employees have expressed their gratitude to the company for providing a chance for them to improve their skills at work, which also translates into improved abilities in their personal life.

Correctional Facilities

Offering literacy tutoring in correctional facilities opens the door to many educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals. For some, it offers an opportunity to provide training to their fellow inmates. To participate in the program, participants must score below the ninth-grade level in reading, writing and math or speak English below the SPL 7 level.

Dedication to others

Volunteer tutor Susi Princis has a fascinating past with rich experiences that give her a perspective that few can rival. This makes her an exceptional teacher, who has transformed the lives of her students. She shares, "I was born in Israel to German immigrants and Holocaust survivors. I moved to the Dominican Republic at age 4 and then to Puerto Rico at age 6. My parents married in Prague after leaving Germany and then immigrated to Palestine, which became Israel in 1948."

Susi teaches a wide range of students, from the lowest to the highest levels. An exceptionally patient teacher, she loves her low-level literacy students as much as she loves her advanced students.

Susi has been working with Celso Acosta for the last two years. Celso is a deaf adult literacy student in his mid-70s who emigrated from Ecuador after he and his wife retired. He suddenly lost most of his hearing about 10 years ago due to an illness, and because of his struggles with anxiety, he did not want to be in public places. His wife was able to convince him to drive her to the Plainfield Public Library to meet the staff and volunteers.

His wife let the Plainfield Library know that Celso was interested in becoming a U.S. citizen, but needed to learn English first. He reluctantly agreed to meet with a tutor, and his wife believes this changed his life forever. "He loves Susi and is much more confident now," explains his wife. "When Celso was in the hospital recently, all he could think and say to everyone was that he had to get well to come to meet with his tutor!"

Susi meets Celso twice a week with a smile on her face and the willingness to adapt and change to his multiple needs. She patiently explains and repeats information Celso could not hear or understand and encourages him to keep learning. When he tells Susi that he is too old to learn, she reminds him that she is older and is still learning. She agrees that being older and learning something new is hard, but they can do it together.

- Five literacy programs provided adult basic education or ESL instruction in local correctional facilities; five programs provided literacy instruction at state facilities; and one program worked with one federal facility
- 523 adult learners qualified and became students
- 79 inmates whose skills exceeded high school levels became peer tutors
- 49 citizens from local communities tutored in correctional facilities

Adult Literacy, Public Library Partnerships

Public libraries throughout Illinois play an important role in educating adult learners. Literacy programs rely on libraries for a full array of library services, and many libraries are providing services to more than one literacy program. In fiscal year 2020, libraries and literacy programs worked together to achieve the following results:

- 78 adult literacy programs assisted 2,340 adult learners in obtaining library cards
- 87 libraries provided overhead support for Illinois State Library funded literacy projects
- 148 libraries offered special collections for adult learners
- 367 libraries provided tutoring space for literacy volunteers to work with adult learners
- 366 libraries provided recruitment and referral of adult learners to literacy programs around the state

Susi recently convinced Celso to attend a beginner's English class at the library and to try something out of his comfort zone. He agreed because he trusts her implicitly and wants to make Susi proud.

Susi encourages Celso to communicate with others around him. She writes words for Celso phonetically for him to know how it should sound in English. With a big smile, he walks around the building saying, "Good morning, how are you?" This may seem simple to others around him, but it took a lot of practice for Celso to be able to memorize it phonetically and gain the courage to use it. Susi's positive attitude is contagious, and her love for tutoring and her students is deep.



Celso (left) and Susi (right) study together during a tutoring session.

Friends forever

Soft spring light falls unhindered through the windows on the sixth floor where there are no trees to block the sun. Abraham sits low on a sofa against the wall, papers spread out on the coffee table in front of him. He leans forward to read the piece of paper in his weathered hand, an index finger helping him keep his place as he sounds out each word. Across from Abraham, Everett crosses his legs in a wooden kitchen chair and listens patiently as Abraham reads and only leans in toward the coffee table to help if asked. Abraham and Everett have been meeting like this for more than 10 years. "I have learned many good things from Everett," Abraham says with a smile.

The two men met in 2004 in one of World Relief DuPage/Aurora's English classes for refugees. Abraham, who is from Liberia, had resettled in Wheaton after fleeing his home with his wife and four children. He was attempting to learn English for the first time. Everett had recently retired and returned to Illinois with his wife after teaching in international schools for many years. He wanted to find a way to use his gifts in retirement, so he began volunteering as an ESL classroom aide. Some might call this timing a coincidence, but to Abraham and Everett it seems like providence.

For four years, they got to know each other during weekly English classes, and in 2008, Abraham wanted to begin studying for his U.S. citizenship exam and interview. Everett volunteered to meet him outside of class once a week to practice. For 18 months they studied together, and in October 2009, Abraham passed his interview and exam to become a U.S. citizen. "It was such an exciting day, and afterward I asked Abraham if he wanted to keep meeting," Everett recalls. "He said, of course!"

On this day, Abraham is reading part of his life story. For the past few weeks, he has been recounting it for Everett, beginning when he was born in Liberia in 1924 to becoming a U.S. citizen. Everett recorded and typed the story so that Abraham could practice reading it and share it with his grandchildren. After finishing several pages, Abraham retreats to the kitchen to boil water for tea and to make hard-boiled eggs and toast. While he waits, Everett pulls out his tablet to play some Liberian music, Abraham's favorite. "Abraham has helped me gain an appreciation for Liberian culture," Everett explains. "It's so important to meet people from different places, so you're not basing your opinions about that group on stereotypes."

Abraham returns with the tea and the two men sit in silence as they enjoy the beverage. In the space of only two hours, Abraham and Everett have laughed together, shared in hospitality, served one another, and sat in this comfortable silence just enjoying one another's presence. These are the markers of true friendship. Before they end their weekly meeting, Abraham confirms this by stating, "He's my very best friend," of Everett, as Everett smiles from across the coffee table.

ON THE HORIZON

- February 18-21 — Learning Disabilities Association Annual International Conference, <https://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference>
- March 2-5 — Illinois Head Start Annual Conference, <http://ilheadstart.org/save-the-date-2020-ihsa-annual-conference/>
- March 10-12 — Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association Conference, <https://www.iacea.net/>
- March 21-24 — Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), <https://coabe.org/2021-coabe-national-conference/>
- March 24-27 — International TESOL Annual Convention, <https://www.tesol.org/>
- April 4-10 — National Library Week, <http://www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek>
- April 18-24 — National Volunteer Week, <https://www.pointsoflight.org/nvw>
- May 3-9 — Children's Book Week, <https://everychildareader.net/cbw/>

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



<https://www.crowdedlearning.org/explore/teacher-tools>
The Crowded Learning website provides resources and teacher tools for remote learning, tutoring, and communication.

<http://edtech.worlded.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Ready-Set-Go-Steps-to-Rapidly-Start-Distance-Learning-2020.pdf>
Setting up then deploying distance education takes a good amount of preparation. EdTech provides a guide to help rapidly start distance learning and describes measures that can be taken to ensure success.

<https://www.literacymn.org/remote-tutoring-resources>
Literacy Minnesota provides resources designed to help tutors, teachers and staff navigate and control the features and functions of web conferencing and social media platforms on computers or mobile devices.

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

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