

THE



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



Inaugural Member Meeting

Many of us did not know what to expect at our first member meeting, held on Friday October 1st, 2010. We covered many issues from banal technical glitches with beloved OnCorps timekeeping reports, to more substantive topics like our success and challenges at our sites. The day had two overall highlights. The first highlight was hearing the first reports from VOCAL members. Each member discussed their overall experiences at their site, allowing all of us to gain insight into each other's roles and work culture. Jesse Greco at IYC St. Charles discussed how it is to work in a changing environment. Jesse mentioned, students are "here today and gone tomorrow" since it is normal for students to be relocated to another center, after gang fights erupt.

Molly Weener of Jane Addams Hull House Uptown discussed balancing difficulties of curriculum and the different comprehension levels in a classroom, without having any prior teaching experience. Lida McDaniel shared her challenges of working with students from impoverished backgrounds, and how sometimes "life happens and students get setbacks." Joe Bruce of Mercy Housing Lakefront also highlighted how societal situations and factors in impoverished student's life take precedent to learning at times.

Dennis Gregory of Tolton Center - De LaSalle Institute said that working in literacy programs is "hard work, not just feel good stuff." He elaborated by saying it takes dedication and patience working with depleted resources, which limit an organization's capacity to be most effective and successful. Martha Ruiz at Instituto del Progreso Latino said, "I can see myself in the people" since she was in their same position as an immigrant to the U.S. who spoke no English. She discussed how this helps her be an effective teacher since she shares the same experience of her students.

We then convened for lunch at our favorite hangout spot...Under 55 of course! Afterwards we gathered back at LVI for a team building exercise lead by two of our group leaders, myself and Jesse Greco. Team Kelli and Team Jesse ventured into the Loop to commence our scavenger hunt. I learned my strengths and weakness as a leader, and more importantly we further bonded as a group. I was excited to learn that my team was victorious, and we each departed with \$10 more in our wallets. I am proclaiming our first meeting as a success and I await our next one!

By Kelli Wilbert



Members of Team Jesse frolicking in Millennium Park pictured doing "Something We All Consider Fun" for the team building scavenger hunt exercise.



Members of Team Kelli pose in the Loop under the "El" train tracks with a police officer for an "Interesting Picture in an Unusual Place" for the scavenger hunt.

2010 National Service Recognition Day

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Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

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The VOCAL Class of 2010-2011 preparing to march to the state Capitol building.

For National Service Recognition Day, nearly 900 AmeriCorps members from Illinois and neighboring States converged on Springfield at the Prairie State Convention Center on October 21st to commemorate the 16th year Anniversary of AmeriCorps. Every year the supersized motivational rally centers on preparing members for a year of service and growth and to take the Oath of AmeriCorps. The event is led by SERVE Illinois Executive Director Ted Gibbs and his amazing staff who welcomed the programs as we filed in. New and current Commissioners were on hand to greet everyone and providing us with the opportunity to engage them with enthusiastic conversation of what to expect from the next 11 months. True to “An ethic of Service” Corps were divided into groups for service projects at local agencies and community based organizations. The activities ranged from reading to pre-school children at the Springfield Urban League Head Start program to beautifying Lincoln Home National Historical Site and the Ronald McDonald House which is the only facility in the Midwest that does not charge the families of children who require long-term medical treatment at the local hospital to live at the residence.

The mood was festive and the air electric with program pride. Every now and then you would hear any number of chants vying for recognition that is until City Year got in the building but Youth Build would never be out chanted. Mr. Gibbs took the stage to welcome everyone to Springfield and Illinois AmeriCorps he read a letter from the Governor’s office acknowledging the work and commitment that members have chosen to partake. Mr. Gibbs then turned the microphone over to Mr. Jerry Lambert the Master of Ceremonies who in turn introduced Springfield Mayor Tim Davlin both of whom have been great supporters of AmeriCorps and SERVE Illinois.

No rally is complete without motivational speakers. The two gentlemen who were selected this had great insights to share. Tim Miles and Jeffrey Fields covered relative scenarios and tried and true responses to answering the call to serve.

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Recognition Day Cont.

Members and program staff took a scaled down version of the Myers Brigg Type Indicator to catch a glimpse into their personal preferences. It became rather entertaining that Mr. Miles referenced popular television and movie characters to depict the four areas of personality types that are the bases for its viewing success. Jeffrey Fields offered a different take on at-risk youth versus youth with learning disabilities. Emotions ran high as Mr. Fields told his story of how he grew up as a kid who had serious challenges and suffered from abuse.

It wasn't until he attended college and began to get the help that he needed that he discovered the disparities between children who suffer from clinically diagnosed disabilities or children who just need a little guidance and attention. He found that children were either labeled at-risk or learning disabled but that the people doing the labeling forgot about the children in the middle, such as himself. Both speakers made great points, offered some solutions and left everyone with the impression that there really is more than one way to impact a person's life. Although there was not a band this year to lead the parade there was still instruments playing as the chorus of member voices rose through the streets leading to the state capitol steps where the incomparable Merri Dee and Commission Chair Howard Lathan lead everyone with the timeless Oath of AmeriCorps and the promise to "get things done for America". These words have been spoken all over the country as tens of thousands around the country answer the call to serve.

By Chamala Travis, VOCAL Program Coordinator



VOCAL members taking their AmeriCorps service oath. From right to left, Molly Weener, Kelly Bradley, Chrissy Ruby and Lachrista Greco.

A Member's Perspective:

After a pre-dawn rising and a long bus ride, we arrived in Springfield, Illinois with anticipation for what the day would hold. Shortly after entering the Prairie Capital Convention Center we began interacting with other AmeriCorps groups from various areas in Illinois asking them questions to fill out bingo cards and learn a little bit more about others we are serving with. After a little networking, we had the opportunity to hear from the keynote speakers Tim Miles and Jeffrey Fields, who each offered encouragement, motivation and thanks for what we are doing and how we are helping those we serve.

Following our march to the Capitol building we had the opportunity to reflect on what it truly means to volunteer and we're offered thanks by speaker Merri Dee, once again for our, "work, dedication, hospitality, grace and love we extend to those around."

I feel honored to have had the opportunity to participate in this day of recognition. What an encouragement to interact with others who are just as passionate about *getting things done* as I am. As I stood on the steps of the Capitol building, I felt proud of who we are and what we are doing for America. I could recite the words of the AmeriCorps pledge with confidence and strength, as those words are truly a testament to what we believe as AmeriCorps members.

Although at the end of the day we were left stranded at a gas station waiting for our bus to be fixed, I looked at the people around me and saw new relationships being built through a commonality of wanting the greatest good for all – I felt truly inspired.

By Molly Weener, Jane Addams Hull House Uptown Center



SCRABBLE For Literacy Challenge



Competitive players *scrabbling* to beat one another before time runs out!

The 7th Annual SCRABBLE For Literacy Challenge was held on Saturday, October 16th at the Grossinger Autoplex in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. The LVI staff, board members and volunteers arrived early in the morning (and throughout the day) to prepare for the event and guarantee its success. At attendance in the event were tournament SCRABBLE players (the professionals), competitive players (those serious about the game) and those who came to play in our “just for fun” section. It was a great mix of people and an enjoyable evening. Fellow VOCAL member Sarah Kosmin and I hosted the Word Play game, where guests scrabbled to write down as many words as they could with the letters provided in the allotted five minutes—talk about pressure!

The event grossed \$13,000 in cash and in-kind contributions. The money raised will be used to support Literacy Volunteers of Illinois programs. Everyone had a great time, met new people, enjoyed plenty of food, and honed their SCRABBLE skills.

By Kelli Wilbert



VOCAL members (from right to left) Kelli Wilbert, Chrissy Ruby, Kelly Bradley and Sarah Kosmin who volunteered for the event.



AmeriCorps members (from right to left) Precious Murphy and Jason Love came out to help at the 7th Annual Scrabble event.

SPECIAL THANKS!

LVI thanks the following AmeriCorps members who contributed their time and (wo)man-power to ensure a memorable day!

Kelly Bradley, Mercy Housing Lakefront
Sarah Kosmin, LVI, IYC-Chicago
Chrissy Ruby, LVI
Kelli Wilbert, LVI
Jason Love, UIC, Project MORE
Precious Murphy, UIC, Project MORE
Mario Valle, UIC, Project MORE

Member Spotlight



Danielle Hammel
Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC)-
Adult Learning Program Services Specialist

Danielle is originally from Grand Rapids, MI but has called Chicago home since 2008. Danielle is a graduate of Aquinas College where she studied History, International Relations and Spanish. Before becoming an LVI VOCAL AmeriCorps member Danielle worked in an immigration law firm and tutored ESL in the program she now coordinates at JARC.

She moved to Chicago shortly after returning to the United States from Mexico, where she lived and studied as part of her undergraduate education. The first few months as program coordinator at JARC have already provided her with a wealth of new skills and she particularly enjoys working to empower JARC's clients to take control of their own education. She looks forward to working with JARC to expand the English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education programs.

Upon completion of the program Danielle hopes to either pursue a career in non profit legal services as an immigration attorney, or continue in the field of English as a Second Language instruction and Adult Education.



The Corporation promotes strong communities, business and households to ensure that people who work do not live in poverty. Services provided include: high quality skills training and support services to lower income and unemployed workers to achieve self sufficiency, and workforce development services to business to improve their competitiveness. Also educational services include: one-to-one small group tutoring in adult basic education and through the Community technology Center, computer-assisted GED preparation instruction.



Molly Weener
Jane Addams Hull House Uptown Center -
Adult Educator for the Even Start program

Molly is from Spring Lake, MI. She graduated from Hope College in 2009 with a B.A. in Religion and Ministry. Molly spent the last year at the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago working towards her Masters in Divinity. Molly joined AmeriCorps because she has a passion for people – to work beside them and for them. She says, “Helping others brings me joy.”

Molly teaches ESL to adults and tutors school-aged children. Molly finds such satisfaction in knowing that she is making a difference in the lives of the women she teaches. Molly says “This has been an experience of mutual learning and teaching between my students and me. I feel very privileged to be able to work with the people here.”

In the future Molly knows she will be working with people and helping others, and she has discovered that she loves teaching ESL! She says, “I’m so thankful for the opportunity to work for AmeriCorps as it has helped me realize other possibilities for my future – possibilities I never even knew existed.”



Literacy is the overarching focus of Hull House's educational and child developmental programs, where programs focus on providing family support services that strengthen literacy and parenting skill development. Programs offered place a strong emphasis on emergent literacy skill development that includes providing parents with information, materials and activities to effectively engage their children at home. Interactive parent/child activities are provided regularly, such as family reading nights, supported classroom participation by parents, and a lending library of take home kits.

Events and Announcements

Upcoming Events



Thursday, November 25th

LVI Office will be closed
Thursday, the 25th and Friday, the 26th

Friday, December 3rd

ALRC Adult Education Conference

8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Bloomington, IL
(Members check with host site on attending)

Thursday, December 9th

Quarterly Member Meeting

Topic: *MBTI - What Type Am I?*
1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
LVI Office

Holiday Party

5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Exchequer Restaurant Pub

Friday, December 10th

Program and Member Updates

Topic: *Justice Talking*
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
LVI Office

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

**Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
VOCAL AmeriCorps Holiday Party**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010

5:30 P.M. - 8:00P.M.

EXCHEQUER RESTAURANT

226 S. WABASH AVE.

CHICAGO, IL 60603

PLEASE R.S.V.P. BY DECEMBER 6TH

312-857-1582 OR LVAILL@AOL.COM



Tutor Tip

Have students create their own dictionary!

- 1) Have them tell you in their own words the explanation of a word.
- 2) Then you can have them list words with similar meanings to have an example of synonyms and do the same for antonyms.
- 3) Lastly have them write a sentence using the word to check for comprehension.

