



VOCAL NEWS

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



MLK Day...A Day On, Not Off!

Monday, January 16th marked the 26th anniversary of the celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday, and as we have spent so many of the King Holidays before, it was a *Day On, Not Off* for our VOCAL members. Given the size of our Corps – 32 members – and varied locations – northern, central and southern Illinois – various projects, as you will see featured in these pages, were conducted that day. All were member planned and member-driven, and I thank all of our members for participating as they could in each of them. While it was the force of the Corps that made each successful, it was members Sarah Paulson, Joe Bruce, Anna Ochs and program coordinator Jacki Sprinkle, who took on leadership roles in organizing the activities, and I thank them for their extra efforts.

The MLK *Day On, Not Off* officially began in 1994, when Congress passed legislation encouraging the King Federal Holiday to be observed as a national day of service. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was charged with leading this effort, which accounts for our participation. In Washington, both the President and Vice-President took part in service day activities, and here in Illinois, LVI was honored to have Congressman Mike Quigley join us for a Day of Service at Children's Memorial Hospital. Congressman Quigley has been a consistent supporter of AmeriCorps programming and his visit provided us and the Serve Illinois Commission with an opportunity to thank him for that support.

Additional day of service activities will be conducted during National AmeriCorps Week in March, and we invite you to suggest activities within your agencies or communities which our Corps can spearhead or otherwise be involved with.

- Dorothy M. Miaso

Lending a Hand: Lincoln Park Community Shelter

At 7:30 a.m. on MLK, Jr. Day, I and eleven other VOCAL AmeriCorps members gathered at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter (LPCS) for a morning of volunteerism. We started our day by bustling around the kitchen preparing a hot breakfast for shelter residents. At 8:30 a.m., we served scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, potatoes, coffee, orange juice, and fresh fruit to the residents, then sat down and joined them for a few minutes of conversation before cleaning up the kitchen.

After breakfast, the volunteer coordinator at LPCS spoke to our group about the history and day-to-day operations of the shelter, as well as the importance of volunteer service to the success of the shelter. We then split into groups and tackled various chores around the shelter. Some members organized and sorted clothing and household donations while other members inventoried and cleaned. By the end of the morning, we were all ready for a relaxing lunch and a reflection of the service we had performed that day. Over a meal at Chipotle, we discussed what we had learned from the service project that morning. Our day at the LPCS was a welcome reminder of the importance of the spirit of volunteerism in our work as AmeriCorps members, as well as in our day-to-day lives.



-Sarah Paulson, LVI

Stories of Possibility: Children's Memorial Hospital

Dorothy M. Miaso
Executive Director

Jaclyn Sprinkle
Member Coordinator
VOCAL AmeriCorps

Joni Gravatt
Program Coordinator
IYC-Harrisburg

Debra Sundberg
Program Coordinator
IYC-Kewanee

Jeanette Kiene
Program Coordinator
IYC-St. Charles

Another service day project done by the LVI AmeriCorps members was meeting with children and their siblings who are patients at Children's Memorial hospital. The event took place in the Brown Family Life Center at the Hospital which is a special place for the kids where they can get away from their hospital room and enjoy time with their family.



Congressman Quigley (left and below) joined in the day's activities.



We had seven volunteers manning four activity stations; arts and crafts, reading and writing, worksheets (cloze, word-finds stories with questions) and bookmaking. The children and their parents really seemed to enjoy the diversion and new faces. I was personally attended to by two little doctors who fixed my "owies" with tape and gems. Not only did I feel better, but I looked great too! Joining us in our project were Congressman Quigley of the 5th Congressional District, Dorothy Miaso, the Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers of Illinois and Ted Gibbs, the Executive director of the Serve Illinois Commission.

After our time at the hospital, Dorothy took the volunteers out for a lunch adventure where we reflected on our service and enjoyed one another's company. Sometimes we get wrapped up in our daily work and forget what we are here to do—this was a welcome and enjoyable reminder! Thanks LVI for organizing these events for us.

-Beth Hausler, Albany Park Community Center

AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Sarah Paulson
Program Associate

Chinwe Ntamare
Health Literacy Associate

Cherie Eller-Ferrell
IYC-Harrisburg

Jennifer Wagner
Phyllis Dotson
Ron Happach
IYC-Kewanee

Byron Eden
IYC-St. Charles

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MLK Day of Service at IYC Kewanee

On January 16, 2012, three VOCAL members at IYC Kewanee, as well as the Jump Start Program Coordinator, Deb Sundberg, honored Martin Luther King Jr. Day by "getting things done" within our communities. Even in our small towns, there are many great needs. Member Ron Happach realizes this, and frequently volunteers at his local food pantry. This inspired our service projects; we donated to food pantries in four different communities including Kewanee, Sheffield, Princeton and Annawan. Monetary and food donations were made, and since many of the pantries get low on food supplies after the holidays, our contributions were much appreciated by many people in need.

During classes at IYC Kewanee that week, we talked with the students about the importance of Martin Luther King Jr. Additionally, Deb Sundberg set up a book display with books about Martin Luther King Jr. and other important African American figures, which students checked out to learn more about these important individuals.

-Jennifer Wagner, IYC Kewanee

MLK Day Children's Workshop: Mercy Housing Lakefront

Instead of lounging around on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, VOCAL Members got up and got something done for America. Members Joe Bruce, Rayne Bozeman, Chinwe Ntamere, and I, along with our coordinator Jacki Sprinkle, trekked to the south side of Chicago to engage with the youth living at one of Mercy Housing's family facilities. Four stations were set up with activities that included crafts, poetry, and reflection, and each Member facilitated a station. The youth that came were then divided into four groups, and rotated between the stations for the duration of the workshop.

The age range was diverse; nineteen children between the ages of 3 and 15. Fortunately, the lessons about MLK Jr., such as freedoms and rights, can span all age groups. With such a wide range of ages, it was a controlled chaos, but an excellent experience for both the AmeriCorps members and the children who attended. It was clear



the children were seeking an outlet for their energy, but through painting, poetry, crafts, and discussion they were able to engage and be entertained. Because of this project, I was able to see a side of the city I never before had, and in addition to being a mentor for the day, I also had time to connect with my team members.

At the end of our time there, the kids were all smiles asking us when we would be back. While having only one afternoon to spend with these children seemed to fall short of changing their lives, it certainly brightened them for a time. It's these temporal moments that inspire me to continue working towards the next.

- Teresa Zehfus, Christopher House

Check out other VOCAL Members' MLK Day service reflections on the LVI website at www.lvillinois.org.

LeaderCorps Update:

On December 14th and January 11th, I participated in the first LeaderCorps conference calls with fellow AmeriCorps members from across the state. We shared and discussed potential service projects for the MLK Jr. Day of Service. All of the chosen service projects from AmeriCorps programs were highlighted in a press release issued by the Serve Illinois Commission in early January. During our conference calls, we brainstormed possible ways to improve volunteer recruitment for large service projects, with such suggestions as getting schools and AmeriCorps alumni involved, reaching out to businesses and government agencies, and creating competitions for program members to recruit the most volunteers.

During our next conference call, we will reflect on the effectiveness of our chosen service projects and begin to discuss proposals for AmeriCorps Week. An important announcement passed on by the Serve Illinois Commission during the conference call was that AmeriCorps Week has been moved up to March 10-18th.

-Sarah Paulson, LVI

December Quarterly Meeting

MBTI and Personality Types



On Thursday, December 8th VOCAL AmeriCorps members gathered at the Pui Tak Center for the first session of the December Quarterly Member Meeting, a workshop and personality assessment utilizing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Prior to the workshop, we were each asked to complete a survey, which scored and identified participants' personality type based on their answers to the questions. We were then given an interactive presentation by Chris Parker, Ph. D. on the different dimensions of the MBTI. The presentation concluded with each member receiving his or her results from the MBTI survey. Dr. Parker then helped us compare our results within the groups, highlighting qualities that were similar across group members and those that were different.

The MBTI survey can be helpful in showing us how we tackle problems, interact with others, take in information, and make decisions. Ideally, an understanding of one's personality traits and Myers-Briggs type will enhance professional and social performance and help create a greater awareness of the unique personalities of those around you. For example, I found my own assessment very accurate in that my personality type tends to internalize rather than confront problems. Awareness of this tendency will help me identify and solve problems more constructively in both personal and professional settings. From teaching and volunteer coordination to our relationships with fellow coworkers and VOCAL members, we will certainly be able to use the information we learned from the MBTI at our AmeriCorps sites.

- Sarah Paulson, LVI

Holiday Celebration in Chinatown

Following Thursday's Quarterly Member Meeting, LVI conducted its annual holiday celebration at Lee Wing Wah in Chinatown. VOCAL members had a chance to explore the neighborhood's sites before reconvening to dine on authentic Chinese fare. During their free time, some members visited local bakeries and markets, while others searched for gift shops to purchase a last minute present for the progressive grab bag. Once at the restaurant, LVI staff, board members, VOCAL Members, and family members mingled and drank plum wine or green tea while they eagerly awaited the first course.

The meal began with sweet and sour soup, and an appetizer of crab rangoon. The main course dishes were beautifully displayed, and included specialties that appealed to everyone's preferences. When dinner began winding down, Dorothy Miaso gathered everyone's attention to begin the gift swap. There were several popular gifts in the pile that did not remain with their original winner, but by far the most sought after item of the evening was a Snuggie! In addition to the great food and fun, the holiday party offered a chance for the LVI community to come together and celebrate the important work that had been accomplished in 2011.

-Jaclyn Sprinkle



December Quarterly Meeting (cont'd)

On Friday, December 9th, the VOCAL AmeriCorps members gathered for our quarterly meeting at the LVI office downtown. At the meeting, members gave reports about their service year to date. These reports gave some valuable insight into both the unique highlights at each site, but also some of our shared challenges as Literacy Volunteers.

Following a lunch break, we were led in a round-table discussion as part of the Project on Civic Reflection's *Meaning of Service* series. The facilitator, VOCAL Alumnae Maya Marshall, prompted us to think critically about the poem "The Lovers of the Poor" by Gwendolyn Brooks. This discussion enabled us to share our perspectives with each other and learn why other members have chosen to commit to this year of service.

Overall, the day allowed us to share our experiences and opinions with our colleagues, and brought us a little closer as a group. For me, the highlight of the day was receiving our snuggly LVI hoodies as we left the meeting!

- Rayne Bozeman, *Center for Companies that Care*



Members reflect on their service during the Justice Talking session.

Teaching Multi-Level Learners



On November 4th I, along with many VOCAL Members, attended a workshop with Tony Perone, who introduced a variety of ways to engage with multi-level learners in a single classroom. He encouraged us to re-imagine our roles and those of our students as co-learners and co-teachers, as we all instruct each other in the classroom through our cultural and language backgrounds, life experiences, and our learning styles. Perhaps most importantly, Perone emphasized that teachers are not just imparters of knowledge, but also facilitators of class relationships, participants in activities, and collaborators with students in the learning process.

The most practical advice he gave was the “buffet of activities” that he incorporates into his classrooms. By giving students options, the teacher can respect diversity among learners and learning types, as well as cater to the needs of individuals. In these “self-access” buffets, students can choose what they want to do from a set of given materials and activities, from using flashcards to writing personal stories about their lives. Perone gave many examples of projects, and during the second half of the workshop, each of the LVI participants chose an activity or activities to complete. Many of his creations included practical knowledge, such as how to read a medicine bottle or how to use Sunday circulars to make a budget and a shopping list for a party. In card soup, we created sentences using a given set of words, punctuation, and blank cards, which encouraged creativity.

Since the workshop, I have incorporated many of these ideas into my classroom. The students have appreciated having the ability to choose their own work, and to get one-on-one attention from me or a volunteer during the “self-access” period that begins every class. In the coming semester, I will incorporate another of Perone’s ideas in the classroom, that of creating a book of students’ personal narratives.

- Anna Ochs, *Instituto del Progreso Latino*

Spotlight:

Members at Albany Park Community Center



Hannah Vis

I grew up in Grand Rapids, MI, and attended college in Kalamazoo at Western Michigan University, where I majored in Music – Cello Performance and Spanish. During college I studied in Burgos, Spain for four months, and while there had the chance to travel around Spain and Italy. When I graduated, I moved back to my parent’s house for the summer and played cello for weddings, and played a musical called *Into the Woods* for Hope Summer Repertory Theater in Holland, MI. Once the summer ended, I decided to move to Chicago! I joined the VOCAL AmeriCorps program because I was interested in working for a literacy program and I wanted a change of environment.

I have been working through LVI at Albany Park Community Center (APCC) since I started with the AmeriCorps program in September 2010. Both years I have been working as an Adult Literacy Volunteer, but each year I have been doing something a little bit different. Last year, I was working with the Employment and Career Coordinator, helping clients and students who needed employment and help building their resumes. I also tutored ESL, Math, and Reading. This year, I am assisting more in classrooms, helping the teacher give lessons, and pulling out students for additional reading practice. I have continued tutoring ESL and Math. I really enjoy working with and learning about all the students at APCC. The most rewarding thing for me to see is when my students are proud of their own work. The most challenging thing for me is getting myself out bed in the morning... I’m not a huge morning person.

After I finish the AmeriCorps Program...well I haven’t figured that out yet. But, I plan to get a job of some sort and then go back to school, maybe for Speech Pathology.



Jaclyn Land

I am originally from Ft. Collins, CO and am currently attending Northeastern Illinois University where I am majoring in social work. Before joining AmeriCorps, I worked at a medical fitness center and volunteered as an ABE tutor at Albany Park Community Center. Because I loved volunteering so much, and because I needed to start looking into jobs that fit with my major, I decided to apply to AmeriCorps so that I could become involved with APCC in a greater capacity.

As an AmeriCorps member working in APCC’s Employment and Career Program, I offer educational support to ESL, ABE, and GED students who are looking for jobs. This includes a broad range of services such as tutoring, assisting with resume writing or filling out job applications, helping with preparation for interviews, and providing information about continuing education. I love working with the amazing and supportive staff at APCC, along with having the opportunity to help people “get a leg up” in the job market; I find these to be the most rewarding aspects of the job. The greatest challenge, on the other hand, is helping people compete in a post-recession job market, where the minimum requirements for employment are constantly increasing.

After my AmeriCorps service, I will just be finishing up my BSW and will most likely be looking into grad school. In ten years, my dream is to become an art therapist and eventually settle down in Colorado, where I grew up.

Spotlight: Members at APCC (cont'd)



Elizabeth Hausler

I am from Chicago, Illinois. I studied Accounting and Economics at DePaul University. I worked as an auditor for a public accounting firm and as an internal auditor for a large corporation. When I was raising my family, I worked on my own as an accountant for small businesses.

Throughout my life, I have been involved in my community and have always had an interest in literacy and education. As I wound down my career in accounting I volunteered as a literacy tutor at APCC. It was there that I saw the opportunity offered by AmeriCorps to receive training and work as a literacy tutor through LVI.

I have truly enjoyed my time working as a literacy tutor and it has inspired me to enroll at Northeastern Illinois University to earn an MA-TESL degree so that I can continue in this rewarding field.



Natalie Brown

I am from the Great Lakes region, and have lived in Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Indiana. I attended Indiana University in southern Indiana and received degrees in International Studies and Germanic Studies. Before joining AmeriCorps here in Chicago, I lived and worked in the forests of Massachusetts and Oregon as a lumberjack and wilderness medic for trail crews. Not surprisingly, these skills don't really transfer well to urban living in Chicago! After finishing my last contract in Oregon I was due to fly from Seattle back to Massachusetts, but decided on a whim to try out

Chicago and find work more related to her degrees. I began to tutor ESL at Albany Park Community Center this past March.

At APCC I grew to love the field of teaching English, so when I noticed the opening for AmeriCorps volunteers I applied. I now work as a part time AmeriCorps member. A typical day consists of tutoring one-on-one for ABE reading and ESL, assisting in a Level 1 ESL classroom, and serving as a computer lab monitor a few hours per week. There are endless rewards to working with clients at APCC. It is a continuous joy to see the 'aha' moments of understanding. Food offerings from students also rank very high as rewards. The challenges of APCC are the need to be continuously flexible, humble and understanding in whatever capacity of service is needed.

I plan to stay at Albany Park Community Center after my AmeriCorps term is finished. In 10 years I hope to have conquered the world, or at least visited more of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. I also hope to continue working within the field of Adult Literacy/ESL and perhaps attend Graduate school for Linguistics.



The Albany Park Community Center is a non-profit, community-based agency located in the multi-ethnic, working class neighborhood of Albany Park. The Center operates a range of programs and, since its inception, has been the largest social service agency exclusively serving the Albany Park neighborhood. Adult education programs offered include ESL, ABE, GED and GED Test Preparation classes; Citizenship Test Preparation in English and Spanish; Family Literacy; Adult Literacy Tutoring for ESL, pre-GED, and Adults with Special Learning Needs; and a Community Technology Center that offers free internet and computer access.

Tutor Tip: Improving Motivation

Completion of reading assignments many times requires a person to work on maintaining a high level of motivation. Several tips for improving and maintaining motivation while reading are outlined below.

- Be Task-Oriented
 - Understand the purpose, instructions, and expectations of the reading task before getting started in order to maintain motivation.
- Consider Goals
 - Relate completion of the assignment to short-term goals, such as fulfillment of course objectives and requirements, and to long-term goals, like graduating from school.
- Work with Others
 - Develop a support system for completing difficult or uninteresting reading tasks. Work with other students, taking turns reading, summarizing, and "teaching" the reading material. Enlist the motivational support of family members, friends, coaches, or instructors.
- Relevance
 - Consider how the reading is relevant to the course, to your academic career, or to your life. Why is the information valuable? How will you use it in the future? How does it relate to personal experiences and beliefs?

Upcoming Dates

Friday, February 3rd

9:00 a.m. – Noon

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Creating a Buzz: Newsletters, Flyers, and Public Information Materials

Friday, February 17th

9:00 a.m. – Noon

Data Collection and Management

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Topics and Techniques for ESL Tutors

Friday, March 9th

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Quarterly Member Meeting

March 10-18th

National AmeriCorps Week

**note change of date*

Monday, March 12th

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

*Volunteer Information and Recruitment Fair
Thompson Building Chicago*

Saturday, April 21st

*On The Road to Literacy Conference
UIC Center for Literacy*

Happy Birthday!

Jennifer Wagner

1/16

Dorothy Miaso

2/1

Sean Pomroy

2/9