Celebrate National AmeriCorps Week

Kicking-off National AmeriCorps Week on Monday, March 9th, AmeriCorps members tabled a Volunteer Information & Recruitment Fair at the James R. Thompson Center. All members were encouraged to bring pamphlets, flyers and any materials they have about their host sites and literacy programs. The goal of the event was to encourage volunteerism by engaging passerby in discussion and answering any questions they have about AmeriCorps or the programs we work with. For the whole day, LVI members attended in two hour shifts to shared information and educate the public on AmeriCorps and their volunteer opportunities. It also turned out to be an opportunity for members to learn about the other members’ programs and opportunities.

It was exciting to meet people with genuine interest in what we were doing—especially when they had no previous knowledge about AmeriCorps. It was also interesting to learn from them what similar volunteering programs they’ve been involved. It was good to know that people are interested in our program because of their personal or professional affiliation with people with low-literacy. At one point, we spoke with a lawyer who had a client she believed would benefit greatly from attending literacy tutoring. This experience has shown us that advocacy and reaching out to the general public was a great way to start off and celebrate National AmeriCorps Week.

Dave Anians, Instituto del Progreso Latino
Being an AmeriCorps member is more than just completing a year or two of service and moving on with your life. Joining AmeriCorps Alums Chicago or another local chapter – should you move – allows you to take leadership of projects that address issues you are passionate about and the opportunity to do them.

AmeriCorps Alums is the only national network that connects the nearly one million alumni of all AmeriCorps programs who have served since 1994 to the people, ideas, and resources that support the commitment to “a lifetime of service.”

AmeriCorps Alums offers like-minded individuals such as all of you, with networking opportunities to expand your professional and social relationships and help achieve future goals. Member Benefits also include discounts on auto insurance and other services as well as extra knowledge on how to better leverage your Segal Education Award. AmeriCorps Alums also offers a Career Center and Career Newsletter, and conducts webinars around a variety of career topics ranging from leadership and resume assistance to career panels and graduate school planning.

You can even participate in online graduate programs through them and possibly earn a $5,000 scholarship. So, by participating in AmeriCorps Alums you can not only re-affirm your AmeriCorps oath to “carry this commitment with me this year and beyond” - but gain valuable information and make great friendships.

There are seventy-nine local Alum chapters in 38 states and the District of Columbia. And, there is one right here in Chicago. You can check out the national organization at http://www.americorpsalums.org or the Chicago chapter at their Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/americorpsalumschicago

Or, check them out at their next meeting, which is Wednesday, April 15th from 7—8 p.m. at the Park Tavern at 1645 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago.

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**Help Students Make History:**

**Become a History Fair Judge**

The Chicago Metro History Education Center is seeking volunteers to serve as judges at their 2015 History Fair event. As a judge, you will evaluate historical research projects—documentaries, performances, exhibits, websites, or research papers on topics related to Chicago history—produced by local students in grades 6-8 or 9-12.

No previous experience or specialized degree in history or education are needed—just an appreciation for student effort, an interest in history, and a commitment to quality education. On the day of the History Fair event, volunteers receive a full orientation and each new History Fair judge is paired with an experienced judge.

Judges are needed the week-end of April 24 & 25. Weekday or evening sessions are also available for judging papers and websites. Website judges are sent URLs to judge and that can be done in the comfort of your home.

Visit [http://www.chicagohistoryfair.org/about-us/volunteer.html](http://www.chicagohistoryfair.org/about-us/volunteer.html) for more information and a full list of event dates.
Celebrating Black History Month in Kewanee

On February 15th, local, county, state and federal dignitaries convened at the Boss Community Center for Kewanee’s Annual Community Black History Extravaganza to celebrate Black History Month.

Those attending included State Representative Donald Moffitt; Mayor Bruce Tossell; Constituent Advocate for Congresswoman Cheri Bustos, Lucie VanHecke; Staff Assistant to U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, Jillian Dykhoff; Henry County Sheriff, Jim Padilla; Kewanee Police Chief, Jim Dison; and Henry County Board Chairman, Roger Gardert. LVI’s Jump Start program coordinator Deb Sundberg, VOCAL AmeriCorps alumni Ron Happach and his wife, and two correctional officers, Tyrone and Paula Baker, were also on hand.

The program kicked off with singing performances. Rev. Ron Toliver began by singing the National Negro Hymn, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” and “We Shall Overcome.” The Wethersfield and Kewanee High School choirs singing under the direction of Gwen Rosenberg and Alex Binek followed. The Second Baptist Choir sang “A Gospel Medley,” and Dominique Young performed a solo for her first appearance at this event, “His Eye Is On the Sparrow.”

Professor Toni Smith from Black Hawk College presented on the topic, “Living the Dream in the 21st Century.” She talked about famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass and his persistence in learning to read and write, which was a huge risk at the time. She also talked about her favorite author Toni Cade Bambara who wrote “The Lesson.” “The Lesson” is a short story about a journey of discovery and responsibility for children and emphasizing how people should realize the need to work hard, make good choices and respect themselves and others to achieve success.

At the end of the day, the program ended with everyone standing and singing, “We are the World”.

Etta LaFlora, IYC-Kewanee

Centro Romero’s Trip to the Children’s Museum

The Family Literacy Program joined up with the Youth Program at Centro Romero on March 5th on a trip to the Chicago Children’s Museum. Participants in the Family Literacy Program had wanted a trip to CCM and with a bus grant and a little help from the Youth Program, everyone was all able to go! Kids and parents packed the bus in high spirits and were ready for an early evening of fun. Upon arrival to the museum, everyone broke up and explored in small groups. There was a special dance event occurring that night, so it was a delight to see and participate in the dance movement! The “Skyline” and “Kids Town” exhibits were extremely popular because the kids would go back and forth between them all evening. It was a short trip but a long evening of playing and learning. Before it got too late, we boarded the bus and made our way back to Centro. We learned, we played, we experienced!

Katie Maranzana, Centro Romero
Second Quarterly Members Meeting

VOCAL AmeriCorps members gathered on Friday, March 6th at the Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building for the second quarterly meeting. Each member has spent the past six or more months tirelessly honing their service skills, and their individual presentations reflected their grown confidence and esprit de corps. During the meeting, the members reviewed their Day of Service projects on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. A notable announcement was made for the “On the Road to Literacy” conference that will be held on April 18th. A few AmeriCorps members — Chelsea, Wendy and Yoselyn — spoke of being a part of the conference planning committee in their reports.

After a delicious, nutritious lunch, the members reconvened for a guided reading presented by Maya Marshall, a teacher at the Howard Area Community Center and former VOCAL AmeriCorps member. Maya’s selected reading was Robert Frost’s “Mending Wall.” After the group completed a round-robin read-through, Maya facilitated a discussion and explored the construction and maintenance of inter-personal boundaries through an analysis of Frost’s poem. In the poem, Frost questioned the value of boundaries outside of the context of tradition. The poem sparked a discussion on the need for boundaries between service providers and their participants and clients. The discussion wrapped with the conclusion that constructing inter-personal boundaries is a natural human behavior. These boundaries can keep people safe and, by having control of their work setting, mentally stable; however, it doesn’t mean that people should have to feel being bound too rigidly and conform to tradition solely for tradition’s sake.

Jason Kaiser, Howard Area

West Side’s Night of 1,000 Stars

It was a late evening on Thursday, March 12th when the West Side Literacy Coalition held their annual Night of 1,000 Stars event at United for Better Living. The event is a yearly special dedication for adult learners at participating adult literacy programs to showcase their accomplishments or other areas of skill. Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition, United for Better Living, Literacy Works, The Learning Center, and Erie Neighborhood house were the 5 agencies that participated. Special guest, Secretary of State Jesse White, gave a speech and spoke about the importance of literacy and education among adults.

Each agency brought along and awarded three “star” students on their achievements. One particular student’s presentation was a beautiful oboe performance from Erie Neighborhood House. At the end of the night, Kathy Allison, Executive Director of United for Better Living, gave inspiring and kind remarks towards every star. She encouraged each student on how valuable they are and that she hopes they can come back one day to inspire new stars.

Yoselyn Ovalle, Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition
**Member Spotlight: World Relief**

**Kathryn Waldron** grew up in South Dakota, but spent a brief time living in Beijing, China. She attended Wheaton College and graduated with a double major in Economics and International Relations. Before AmeriCorps, Kathryn was completing a research project for the National Conference for Undergraduate Research where she presented on the economic growth of China’s provincial regions over 25 years.

Kathryn joined AmeriCorps because of her passion as a former literacy tutor. As the ESL Tutor Coordinator at World Relief, she can explore the non-profit world while helping to promote literacy. Working at World Relief, Kathryn considers it an honor to serve the refugees with their ESL tutoring program because getting to hear their stories is both a reward and a challenge.

In the future, Katheryn intends to go to grad school and earn a PhD in International Relations. She sees herself living overseas, drinking boba tea and editing her latest novel manuscript. Katheryn’s hobbies include reading everything she can get a hold of, writing down the weird things that comes to mind and traveling to wherever and as many countries as she can.

**Yakini Branch** was born in Chicago but grew up in Israel. She attended Roosevelt University with a BA degree in psychology and a minor in African and African-American studies. Prior to joining AmeriCorps, Yakini was in the Air Force from 2003—2011, but because she needed to care for her children, she became a homemaker and started a small bead-weaving business during the past 5 years.

At World Relief, Yakini is the Resettlement Projects Coordinator and helps refugees settle into their new lives. When asked why she joined AmeriCorps, Yakini says it is a service where she gets to show the love and compassion in her heart to others. Being able to meet and learn and connect with so many people is very rewarding and, to her, the challenge comes from not being able to do more.

In the future, Yakini wants to continue to work in refugee resettlement and expand her experience in social services. She also hopes to grow her bead weaving business. And because of her strong passion for her work, Yakini integrates her hobbies like yoga, aromatherapy, cooking and working with crystals into her life’s purpose so that she can share her love of these things with others. She is also very passionate about her role as a mother, and is always seeking to be better and to extend the same love from herself to all other children, and all people.

World Relief-Chicago’s mission is to engage communities to foster dignity and wholeness for immigrants and refugees in transition. English language and literacy development to obtain employment and integrate more fully into the Chicago community is a key avenue that World Relief uses to accomplish its mission. Education services include intensive English Language Training part-time ESL programming, family literacy and in-home tutoring. Also offers weekly employment preparation and cultural adjustment training.
Upcoming Dates

Good Friday, April 3rd
9:00 am—4:30 pm
Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom
Examining Poverty
Language and Literacy Leadership Series
UIC’s Center of Literacy at
1640 W. Roosevelt Rd.

Saturday, April 18th
9:00 am—3:00 pm
24th Annual
On the Road to Literacy Tutor and Adult Learner Conference
UIC’s Center for Literacy—Lower Level
1040 W Harrison St.
Chicago, IL 60607

LVI: Fun Fact
An old proverb says, “March comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb,” which is reference to winter ending and spring beginning. Another popular saying is “March is mad as a hare,” which is a reference to the animals fighting each other.


LVI’s Social Networks

Follow us on Twitter
www.Twitter.com/LVIllinois

All our photos can be found on Facebook, so remember to “Like” us when you visit www.Facebook.com.

Links to both social media are also on the LVI homepage.

Happy Birthday!

Kathryn Van Horn (3/29)

Macy’s Flower Show—State Street 9th Floor
Explore a floral wonderland of multicolored jeweled splendor at the annual Macy’s Flower Show. Featuring 2 million flowers and exotic topiaries, you will find bouquets, finely manicured gardens and more at this spring highlight event.

Dia del Niño Health Walk and Family Festival — National Museum of Mexican Art
Celebrate Mexican Children’s Day and culture at the Dia del Niño Family Festival! It is a 2-mile embellished Health Walk and Family Festival from the National Museum of Mexican Art to UIC Forum where the fun is continued with games, art and activities.
Saturday, 4/11/2015 Free

Artisan Food Festival — Chicago French Market
Meet 100 food makers and taste their cured meats, confections, craft beer, wine, cheese and more at the Artisan Producer Festival at the French Market.
4/25/15 (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Free