



VOCAL NEWS



Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

The Final Member Meeting



Kewanee Member, Katie Cameron



VOCAL members Timothy Potts and Emily Erland

On June 7th, VOCAL* AmeriCorps Members attended the final Quarterly Member Meeting of the 2018-2019 Service Year. In addition to the members who normally attend meetings and trainings, VOCAL* AmeriCorps members from Kewanee were also able to convene at the Literacenter location for the final meeting. Not only was the meeting a chance for members to share their current experiences but also offered members to take a retrospective look at their year of service. There was a cherished community around AmeriCorps during the last meeting with the expansive group.

This was the chance for VOCAL* AmeriCorps to share their accomplishments of the year whether it be recent highlights, service year long growth, or job offers they've received. Two particular members received job offers as a direct product of their two term service: one received a job offer dealing with victims of domestic violence and the second received an offer at her current program. In terms of accomplishments during their service year, some of the members were especially proud of the legacy they will be able to leave behind. VOCAL* AmeriCorps members during their year were able to build infrastructure that was not in place at their host site from databases to simple skeletons of procedure. Stories of individual growth with clients and students were shared as members all had moments they wanted to share not just of their own growth but that of their students. This was the large commonality in the room that day, members were all there because they all cared about the people and communities they were serving. One member said that most should make it their responsibility to make someone else's life better. This was true for everyone in that room.

In addition to speaking of the past year, members spoke about the following year to come. Members gave advice to the incoming VOCAL* AmeriCorps group, a group consisting of many current members who will renew either to continue in their current position or in new positions within the VOCAL* AmeriCorps program.

Continued on page 3



From the Executive Director...

LVI STAFF

Dorothy M. Miaso
Executive Director

Gabriel Perez
Member Coordinator

Melissa Auer
*Program Coordinator
IYC-St Charles*

Alex Dunbar
*Program Coordinator
IYC-Chicago*

Larry Durfee
*Program Coordinator
IYC-Harrisburg*

Teresa Urfer
*Program Coordinator
IYC-Warrenville*

AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Maria Alvarez
Program Associate

Katrina Mioduszewski
*Literacy Specialist
IYC-Chicago*

Carol Taylor
*Literacy Specialist
IYC-Warrenville*

Timothy White
Program Associate

BOARD MEMBERS

Blake Dunphy
President

John McLeod,
Vice President and Treasurer

Chamala Jordan
Secretary

Reynaldo Dumas
Neisha McNeal
Madison Palmer
Don Singer

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
641 West Lake Street, Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60661
P: 312.857.1582
F: 312.587.1586
lvillinois.org
info@lvillinois.org

We're in the final stretch of this program year and in less than two months, August 31st - the term of service that most members signed up for will come to an end. To our members—I hope that the time each of you has spent as an AmeriCorps member is all you thought it would be and more. I hope also that it has instilled in all of you a commitment to a “lifetime of service”, which is a maxim and a goal of the Corporation for National and Community Service’s AmeriCorps program.



Service happens in many forms and opportunities to continue service abound. For some of you, a decision to pursue a career in public service in education, social work, health care, or advocacy, among still others may have already been made. Service can be elected office also and can be as basic as serving on a local school council. After having served in the voluntary sector this past year, you are all likely well aware of the manpower needs of community-based organizations, and I hope you will continue to offer your time and experience to your host site or another in the non-profit sector. This can be as a volunteer tutor or instructor, a member of a Board of Directors or Board committee, or an event planning committee.

Finally, all charitable organizations including your host site and LVI have financial needs, so as you progress in your careers and your time becomes less available consider the impact that your dollars can have !

On behalf of the Board and Staff of LVI, I thank you all – members, host sites, trainers, and program supporters – for being a part of our VOCAL* AmeriCorps program this past year. As this year ends another begins, and member recruitment is now underway. We have numerous openings at a variety of agencies, so we welcome your referrals of family, friends, and even casual acquaintances for both full and part-time service opportunities. A list of host sites and the positions they seek to fill will be posted on the VOCAL page of our web site. Individuals can also apply through the VOCAL page by either downloading a paper application, or clicking on the “AmeriCorps Web site” to apply online.

Life After AmeriCorps (Cont.)



CeCe Garcia, Centro Sin Fronteras (left) and Tonya Watkins Jones, D & H Literacy

Members were pretty consistent with the advice they offered, advice ranged from advocating for mental health and self care of members during demanding service years to the need for initiative whether it be for creating new projects or learning new skills. Many members expressed their gratitude for the professional and personal growth they experienced during their year of service, and they hoped the incoming VOCAL group would see the same opportunity for growth. Ultimately members wanted new members to enjoy their year while not getting overwhelmed by their service year.

Though a year of service is not without its hurdles and challenges, members were able to find comradery and solace in the shared challenges of their fellow VOCAL* AmeriCorps members. The room that day was filled with people, as one member would say, had a lifelong compulsion to serve and learn. Even if the year of service is over, members feel like they will continue to connect with people at large even if they are no longer serving because not only were members able to connect with their organization's community but also AmeriCorps members at large.

The year of service was not only about how much they could give but also about the doors that AmeriCorps could open for them. A lot of members spoke about the ability they had to get out of their comfort zone and learn new skills through others during their year of service. Any time they found that the will-

ingness to step out of their comfort zone was not enough, they found themselves motivated by their students, clients, organization, and even the AmeriCorps pledge as one member sited.

As the 2018-2019 service year comes to a close, the final quarterly member meeting provided members with a chance to gain some perspective on that year from their own advice to future and fellow members as well as the advice they received. Members can only hope that they will leave their positions having left them better than when they started, whether it be for the new member who will fill their role or if they are choosing to sign on for another year.



Members (Left to Right) Patricia McClendon, Willie Meister, Timothy White, Amelia Lerch, and Colin Herzog

“I Am From”

IYC-Chicago Poetry Contest

In the month of May, it was Literacy Volunteers of Illinois’ first poetry contest in the Jump Start program at host site Illinois Youth Center-Chicago. Our AmeriCorps member Katrina Mioduszewski, who serves at the site along with me introduced this great new way to promote literacy to the youth we tutor. The youth who participated showed great pride in their work. The poetry contest used the theme “I Am From”. Eleven youth participated in the contest, and they all displayed great amounts of creativity. LVI’s program coordinator at the IYC, Alex Dunbar, facilitated and helped many of the youth write their poem entries. Our contest winners consisted of a first place winner, a tie for second place, and a third place winner.

The youth who were the winners of the contest had written their poems in exceptional form. The ideas, creativity, and inspirations of the winners “I Am From” poems illustrated truly where they had come from. For example, our first place winner expresses in his poem how resilience and the importance of identity plays a key role in his life. Our first place winner wrote about his home and his ability to persevere in life and how it made him who he is today. The other three contest winners had also written very iconic and memorable pieces which one wrote about his brother, never giving up, and creating a new way in life. The other two contest winners wrote about family and being unique in which shows who they have become in life and where they came from.

Last, the youth who participated in the contest were introduced to a different form of literacy through this contest. They had motivated themselves as well as other youth for future Literacy Volunteers of Illinois literacy contests.

- Timothy White, Program Associate, LVI & Literacy Specialist, IYC-Chicago

I Am From

A home I would never give up on... ever

I am from a place where loyalty is key and courage is respected

I am from a place where no one person is alike

A place where it is ok to be you

I am from a place that made me what I am today

And I am Me

First Place Winner

Member Spotlights



Loretta Coleman is a part-time VOCAL member based at Literacy Chicago. She grew up in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. After high school, Loretta joined the US Army Reserve. After some time with the Reserves she went on active duty for the Air Force and was stationed in Alaska and Georgia. After service, she became an administrative professional in the non-profit sector.

Loretta is a second term AmeriCorps member - her first year was with the Jesse Brown VA Veteran's Food Pantry. She then decided to pursue other avenues to reach out to her community and signed up for a second year of AmeriCorps with the VOCAL program. As a program associate at Literacy Chicago, Loretta's main functions deal with assisting the Program Manager. One of the first big tasks she had undertaken was the organizing and planning of the organization's 50th anniversary gala. She notes that seeing the finished gala after planning it was one of the highlights of her service year. Though Loretta spends a majority of her

time dealing with administrative activities at her host site, it's not her favorite part of the job. The time she gets to spend in the classroom as a substitute teacher and filling in for one-to-one tutors is when she is most happy.

The different directions she is pulled is one of the challenges Loretta faces in her position. She plays many roles because the staff of Literacy Chicago is small. This is where she found her ability to organize really helpful. She likes to focus on singular projects rather than many projects at once but she understands that she is needed in many different places. Overall, she is happy that she is an active part of the growth of the organization and believes she has played a role in increasing their efficiency.

After this year, Loretta sees herself potentially staying on for another year. Her ultimate goal is to create her own small business that teaches financial literacy to others wishing to start their own small business. Even if she decides not to continue in an AmeriCorps role, she says she will stay with Literacy Chicago as a one-to-one volunteer tutor. Outside of AmeriCorps, Loretta enjoys any reason to be outside and active.



Literacy Chicago is a nonprofit organization that empowers individuals to achieve greater self-sufficiency through language and literacy instruction. For five decades, thousands of adults have participated in the broad range of programs offered including basic literacy, GED preparation, ESL, Workforce Development, and Citizenship. Literacy Chicago takes a learner-focused approach to instruction and relies heavily on the efforts of volunteer tutors,, and frequently offers ancillary classes such as health, computer, and financial literacy.



Colin Herzog is a first term VOCAL* AmeriCorps member. Originally from Wisconsin, Colin came to Chicago for Graduate School at Columbia College and decided to stay. He is currently the Literacy Associate at Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA), a community-based social services agency serving immigrant and low-income communities. He first heard of AmeriCorps while being trained to be a volunteer tutor for the Indo-American Center. It was the trainer who let him know about AmeriCorps which led to his position at CMAA.

As a Literacy Associate, Colin mainly coordinates students and volunteers but recently has started helping out as an instructor for the Preparing for Citizenship class. He faces different challenges in his coordinator and instructor roles. As an instructor, communication with his students can be difficult because of the language barrier. His classes are made up of students at varying levels of English which means he must adapt and meet them where they're at. He also faces fast turn

-around times, some students come in with a fast approaching Citizenship test date. He finds the work he does with students the most rewarding, and truly feels more at home in a classroom than in an administrative position. He enjoys the challenge of finding creative ways to reach his students and especially the moment when he has a breakthrough with them.

Member Spotlights (continued)

On the other side of his duties, coordinating students and tutors, he struggles with finding ways to maintain consistent communication with tutors as they previously had been, for the most part, pretty autonomous. He has however been able to develop and implement several new communication strategies including face-to-face meetings and regular check-ins with them via phone and e-mail.

Colin has no firm plan for the end of his term with VOCAL* AmeriCorps. However, he remains open to continuing the work he has started with his students, tutors and staff at the CMAA. Outside of service, Colin enjoys playing guitar, watching movies, and reading. He, along with a friend, is currently working on bringing acts from India to perform in the United States. One of the groups he is working with is an Indian theater troupe that blends the traditional with the more abstract.



Chinese Mutual Aid Association is a fast-paced organization dedicated to fostering the integration of the Pan-Asian immigrant and refugee community into U.S. culture. Established in 1981, CMAA has become a cornerstone of the Uptown community, providing programming for generations of low-income youth, adults, and senior citizens. The Adult Education and Workforce Department provides English as a Second Language, Financial Literacy, Computer classes, and assists clients with transitioning into the workforce, through workshops and individualized counseling.



D & H Literacy Center provides reading, mathematics, computer competency, parenting, anger management and domestic violence classes. Located in West Englewood, the Center provides learners with basic academic skill building and training to help close the gap in state and national proficiency standards, improve worker traits which can lead to employment, and position program participants to receive a General Education Equivalency certificate. The Center also engages in mentoring activities that encourage self-esteem and confidence building and provides parents with skills to communicate, nurture, and reinforce learning at home.



Tonya Watkins Jones is a second term VOCAL* AmeriCorps member. She is the program coordinator for D & H Literacy Center in the West Englewood neighborhood of Chicago, she was born and raised. Tanya is a former Chicago Public Schools (CPS) teacher and a domestic violence guidance counselor. She has an extensive background in Mental Health Counseling having pursued graduate studies in that area. Tonya first heard of AmeriCorps through her previous work with CPS. She was already volunteering with D & H Literacy so when the opportunity to become an AmeriCorps member there presented itself, she decided to do it.

In her second year as a VOCAL member, Tonya is continuing in the position of program coordinator at D&H Literacy. In this position, she is in charge of recruiting tutors, individual tutoring, fundraising, and recently has taken on grant writing and collecting resources for the program. Staying in her position for two years has allowed Tonya to grow in the position, ultimately taking on more responsibilities like grant writing. It is this type of professional and personal growth that was encouraging to Tonya.

Tonya, in her two years, was able to speak about some of the challenges she faces in her position; she mainly spoke about the lack of resources for her clients. She has, however, been able to overcome this challenge by reaching out to other organizations. This is how she's able to treat clients holistically and provide more services to them, which she finds rewarding. Tonya enjoys seeing her clients become independent, having gained the basic skills to get things done on their own. She shared her experience with a client who had been coming in for four years and was not able to read but with the help of her organization is now able to do so.

Continued on page 7

Member Spotlight Cont.

Another rewarding aspect of being an AmeriCorps member, aside from her direct service with clients, is the ability to reach out to a broader pool of organizations, like minded people, and specialized training. One of the training sessions that sticks out to her was *Trauma and Effect on the Brain* put on by Kennedy King College. Tonya also cites the usefulness of the North Side Literacy Coalition Meetings, which provides her with a place to continue networking and reaching out to like-minded people.

Outside of AmeriCorps, Tonya enjoys reading and especially loves inspirational quotes. She finds these quotes helpful to not only her outlook on life, but especially for her clients. Quotes for her can change attitudes as well as turn around stressful or negative situations. She also enjoys travelling with family.



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.



Mike Siemiaszko is a part-time VOCAL* AmeriCorps member with World Relief Chicago. He is from Chicago and is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Justice Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. He heard about the VOCAL program through his host site, As part of his studies, Mike needed to complete an internship and was given a list of potential sites, one of these sites was World Relief Chicago. He began an internship with them and was then asked if he was interested in filling their AmeriCorps position. Though he connected with LVI and AmeriCorps through his host site, he was familiar with AmeriCorps through friends who were in the Peace Corps.

Mike is an Employment Counselor at World Relief. His task there is to find employment for his organization's clients—refugees and asyils who are being resettled in the US. He sees himself as serving the most vulnerable. He works with anywhere from 18 to 70 clients on a monthly basis and they come from every walk of life and every country. He finds this variability a part of the reason why it can be so complicated to find these clients employment, everything adds another piece to the puzzle. There can be a lot of logistics to juggle and take into account when some of his clients need employment very quickly. Despite these challenges, Mike finds the work he does extremely rewarding and every single client a part of the reward. People come in, he says, having no resources, no options and with ultimately no one to turn to, but he is able to be there for them. Working at World Relief has been a very humbling experience for him. It opened his eyes to the world in a way he wouldn't have thought of before and sees himself as looking out for people he would not have otherwise. He is thankful for the experiences to which AmeriCorps has opened him.

Outside of AmeriCorps, Mike is a bartender at a Chicago pub on weekend nights, and is also a coach for the Chicago Mustangs, a youth basketball team

Saturday
October 12th, 2019



Literacenter
641 W. Lake St.
3rd Floor

Upcoming Dates

Thursday, August 1st

Noon - 4:00 p.m.

Tailgate and White Sox Game
Guaranteed Rate Field

Friday, August 9th

9:00 a.m.—3:30 p.m.

Volunteers Make the Difference

Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration
Metcalfe Federal Building
www.ICOVA.info

Friday, August 23rd

Member and Host Site
End of the Year Celebration
Noon—2:30 p.m.
Location—TBA

Wednesday, July 17th

9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Chicago Literacy Alliance
CONFAB

Professional Learning and Development
Literacenter
Swiss Family Roombinson

LVI's SOCIAL NETWORKS



@literacyvolunteersofillinois



www.Twitter.com/LVillinois



To like us on **Facebook**, visit
www.Facebook.com/lvillinois and
click the “like” button.

Cool Places for Hot Days

Now that summer has finally arrived, you may soon be looking for some respite from the heat. Chicago's museums offer a perfect place to go and best of all, many offer free days. Check out the list below.

The Art Institute of Chicago (Adams and Michigan)
Every Thursday evening (5-8 pm) - Illinois residents

DePaul Art Museum (935 West Fullerton)
Free for everyday for everyone

DuSable Museum of African American History (740 East 56th Place)
Every Tuesday admission is free

Lincoln Park Zoo—2001 North Clark
Free entrance all year long.

McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum (99 Chicago Riverwalk)
Every Sunday May to October

Museum of Contemporary Art (220 E. Chicago Ave.)
Tuesdays year round for Illinois residents.

Museum of Science & Industry (5700 S. Lake Shore Dr)
August 26-28.

National Museum of Mexican Art (1852 W. 19th St.)
Free admission everyday for anyone.

National Veterans Art Museum (4041 N. Milwaukee)
Free admission year round for everyone.

Shedd Aquarium (1200 S. Lake Shore Dr.)
August 26-27

Chicago Fed's Money Museum (230 S. LaSalle St.)
Free admission daily.

Chicago History Museum (1601 N. Clark)
Every Tuesday from 12:30 to 9 p.m.

★HAPPY★
BIRTHDAY!

Alex Ramirez - July 13th
Maria Alvarez - July 15th
Amelia Lerch - July 23rd
Gabiella Mulder - July 28th