



VOCAL NEWS



Welcome Americorps Members

On behalf of the board and staff of LVI, I extend a warm welcome to all as we begin this new program year. We are entering our 17th year of the VOCAL program and our 23rd year of AmeriCorps programming and are excited to have each of you – member, host site, program supporter – a part of it.

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And More!

As we begin this new program year, I acknowledge and give our thanks and appreciation to the Corporation for National and Community Service for our third year renewal of the Competitive funding awarded in 2018. The competition for this national “pot of money” is always stiff, so it is a great honor to us and a true testament to all of you for the work being done in your communities by staff and past members of all of your sites. We thank also the Serve Illinois Commission for their continuing support and look forward to another dynamic year of our members “getting things done for America”.

The first three months of the program year - which began September 1st – have been busy. We held three member orientations in September and October in Chicago and Kewanee, where we welcomed a combined 32 new and renewing members. Along with our Literacenter colleague Chicago HOPES for Kids we took our annual road trip to Springfield for Serve Illinois' annual National Service Recognition Day. We were excited to see our former VOCAL Program Coordinator, who is currently a member of our Board of Directors, recognized as one of the “25 for 25” – which were special awards going to 25 notable alumni in honor of 25 years of AmeriCorps programming. Chamala was a VOCAL member in our program in 2004-2005. A few days after the trip we had our annual SCRABBLE for Literacy Challenge – which members helped with and participated in, and followed that in November with another fundraiser a Casino Night that we sponsored with Literacy Chicago. That event was barely over, and our Serving Those Who Served annual Veteran's Day Service activities were beginning. All of this and more is covered in this issue of VOCAL News !

As the year continues, we look forward to our monthly first Friday sessions that are a mix of training sessions and member meetings, MLK Service Day activities, National AmeriCorps Week, the annual On the Road to Literacy Tutor and Adult Learner Conference, and a host of activities with which members will engage at their host sites. We hope to profile those activities in future newsletters as well.

Thanks for being a part – I anticipate that this will be another exciting year !



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Literacy Volunteers of Illinois

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IYC-Warrenville

Carol Taylor
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National Service Opening Day

This year, AmeriCorps and its Illinois members got to celebrate its 25th anniversary with the National Service Opening day on Thursday, October 10th at the Bank of Springfield Convention center in the state capital. Hosted by the Serve Illinois Commission, which is the state entity charged with leading national service programming in Illinois, hundreds of members from all throughout the state converged on the convention, being greeted by both Honest Abe, as well as the national Director of AmeriCorps, Chester Spellman.

The program began with opening remarks from both the Executive Director of Serve Illinois, Scott McFarland, and National Director Spellman; after



which, they honored 25 AmeriCorps alumni members for their service, including LVI's own Chamala Jordan, seen here receiving her award from Executive Director McFarland. This was followed by a Keynote Speech delivered by PHENOM, the founder of POETREE Chicago and the L.Y.R.I.C. program, and former Public Allies member who had been personally

recruited to the program in 1995 by former First Lady Michelle Obama, who at the time was the Executive Director of the agency. After recounting how he was recruited and getting to learn from the future First Lady, he pumped up the crowd with his enthusiasm for service, and demonstrated some of the poetry and skill he uses to help connect with Chicago high school students, and help them channel themselves through words, in order to combat violence.

Now channel PHENOM's infectious enthusiasm, the AmeriCorps members got to participate in a series of workshops, with topics ranging from personality tests, to life post-AmeriCorps, to how to perform first aid on bloody wounds and grand writing. Each went about a half hour, with VOCAL*members representing LVI at many of them. However, even though the sessions were condensed, they still served as an effective preview and taste into areas like self-care, how to serve in other capacities, and approach service differently.



Unfortunately, due to the rain, the Opening Day was unable to include the march to the Old State Capital; instead, Serve Illinois had to adapt and take the oath in the convention center. the end of the day, VOCAL members left invigorated for their year of service, connect with 25 years worth of AmeriCorps history, and look forward to making their mark on the next 25 years.

2019/2020 VOCAL AmeriCorps Members



- Linda Bolls, Abilities Plus, Kewanee
- Kaitlyn Cameron, YMCA Kewanee
- Yoraima Chavez, Senior Community Services Center, Kewanee
- Keya L. Crandall, Literacy Chicago
- Soledad Estrada, Senior Community Services Center, Kewanee
- Faith Fojas, World Relief DuPage/Aurora
- Cecilia Garcia, Centro Sin Fronteras
- Brittany Grier, YMCA Kewanee
- Colin Herzog, Literacy Volunteers of Illinois
- Brittany Hetzel, World Relief Dupage/Aurora
- Galina Khartulari, IYC-Warrenville
- Will Leslie, National ABLÉ
- Stanley Lim, Literacy Works
- Tonya Lozano, Centro Sin Fronteras
- Dean Martin, Association House
- Patricia McClendon, Chinese Mutual Aid Assn

- Gabriela Mulder, Literacy Works
- Damien Nierynck, Salvation Army, Kewanee
- Juana Nunez, World Relief DuPage/Aurora
- Miriam Perez, Centro Sin Fronteras
- Janet Pilarski, Kewanee YMCA
- Temothy Potts, Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition
- Nayla Rodriguez, Centro Romero
- Sophia Rodriguez, Centro Sin Fronteras
- Kari Sturtivant, YMCA Kewanee
- Carol Taylor, IYC-Warrenville
- Olivia Terry, Centro Romero
- Kayla Thomas, Salvation Army Kewanee
- Zilagi Velasco, Centro Sin Fronteras
- Evan Walters, Waukegan Public Library
- Hope Wetlesen, World Relief Chicago
- Autum Zigterman, World Relief Chiago

Member Orientation Day

The 2019 VOCAL AmeriCorps member orientation began just as any other staff training might - with a few yawns, several binders of paperwork, and an engaging, candy-themed exercise to break the ice. But by the end of the day, new and returning members alike were left with both invaluable information about the program and a budding sense of community that is sure to flourish throughout the upcoming year of service.

On September 6, VOCAL members near and far to Chicagoland traveled to the Literacenter for the first LVI VOCAL AmeriCorps member training of the year. As a way to get to know one another, members shared interesting summer experiences, our best bargain finds, and some personal goals for the service year.

After the icebreaker, LVI's Executive Director Dorothy Miaso sketched the trajectory of national service from its initial stages as FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps, to JFK's VISTA program, and finally to a discussion of AmeriCorps as it is known today. Afterwards, she delved into the state of literacy in America, the changing definitions of literacy over time, and LVI's role in mitigating some of the societal problems that are perpetuated by low adult literacy.

Following this informative conversation, VOCAL members spread out across the common area in the Literacenter's loft for a lunch break. Over Lou Malnati's pizza, members shared past experiences in volunteerism, motivations for joining AmeriCorps, and the work we hope to immerse ourselves in at our respective host sites.

After the break, LVI Member Coordinator Gabriel Perez shared a few highlights of his personal story in AmeriCorps as a member and program director before leading a discussion on member expectations for the year to come.

After orientation was all said and done, members returned home with a binder of guidelines, expectations and rules of the program. More importantly, we—and those who followed us in orientation in Kewanee, and again in Chicago in October, brought home a newfound feeling of community that can only strengthen over the next year.



9/11 National Service Day

If you're unfamiliar with Chicago Union Station, picture this: massive Corinthian columns, polished marble floors, and an expansive Great Hall with a 110-foot ceiling. Now, add in several hundred volunteers methodically packing hundreds of thousands of bags of oatmeal across thirty crowded tables, and you'll have an accurate mental image of this year's 9/11 National Service Day, of which several VOCAL AmeriCorps members took part.



Over the course of about eight hours, VOCAL members helped volunteers from all across Chicagoland pack more than 300,000 meals for members of Chicago's community and beyond. At first, it seemed like an impossible goal. How would all of these strangers come together to execute the logistics of packing so many bags of oats? Luckily, VOCAL members were there to serve as table supervisors. In this role, members stood at the head of each oatmeal packing table and guided fellow volunteers through the process of packing each oatmeal bag. What resulted was a highly efficient assembly line of oatmeal measuring, weighing, heat-sealing and packing - all completed, of course, with the utmost enthusiasm in the name of national service. For other VOCAL members, the day of service was all about heavy lifting. After boxes of oatmeal bags had been stuffed to the brim, VOCAL members moved them to their next location so they could be shipped away to communities in need.

Before the third volunteer shift had even ended, volunteers in the Great Hall were informed by event organizers that the group had successfully packed more than 305,000 meals. As AmeriCorps members began helping tear down the event setup, the air in the Great Hall was heavy with both oatmeal dust and a transcendent pride in national service. All in all, the day was a resounding success, and set the perfect tone for an exciting year to come.

SCRABBLE for Literacy Challenge 2019

On Saturday, October 12th, Literacy Volunteers of Illinois held the 16th annual SCRABBLE for Literacy Challenge! Throughout the day, the line between victory and defeat was spelled out clearly for all of our attendees. Whether they played for fun, competitively, against world champion Brian Cappelletto, or even with the official North American SCRABBLE Players Association tournament, there was a level of play for everyone. With prizes ranging from winning games, a silent auction, and a raffle, the opportunities to walk away with a prize were within reach for every player.

Partaking in fresh chicken tacos, fresh drinks, and good, encouraging company, the attendees entered a letter jumble zone, and by the time the even-

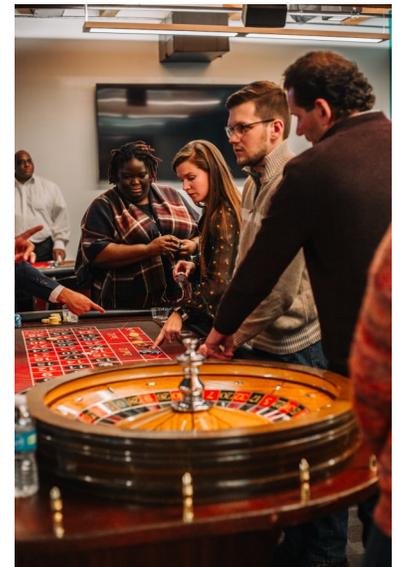


ing completed, walked away feeling satisfied and confident, like they just landed on the triple word score space with the perfect word. We thank all our AmeriCorps members and those from Project MORE for their assistance for helping us and our attendees celebrate the SCRABBLE Challenge's 16th year in style.

Casino Night 2019

On Saturday, November 9th, Literacy Chicago and Literacy Volunteers of Illinois presented the second annual Casino Night in the Literacenter. With the red carpet unfurled, attendees were on a quest to outwit Lady Luck and win riches, provided by our generous donors. With ambient music, courtesy of our DJ for the night, Will Martz, the players got to work, experiencing fun games like roulette, Black Jack, Craps, and Poker. Also, making its debut was a fun new addition to our lineup: a Wheel-of-Fortune-esque wheel, courtesy of Sandi Ivemeyer, our program assistant at IYC—St. Charles, where players could try their luck and see whose number would be closest to the arrow, once the wheel was spun and fate took over.

In addition to the wonderful games, Literacy Chicago and Literacy Volunteers of Illinois also provided fine, home-cooked pork sliders, desserts, and fresh vegetables, with fried and grilled chicken to round the meal off. Of course, with the open bar and Literacy Chicago's "Mystery Wine" table, where wine bottles were wrapped and disguised, so it was up to the picker's luck to see what type of wine they would get, there some tasty options to accompany the great food. Eventually though, the evening came to a close, with the silent auction and the winners confidently walk away from the table with their prizes in tow. With the second annual Casino Night come and gone, we look forward to next year and getting our attendees another hand and another round.



Serving Those Who Served: Veterans Day 2019

During the week of Veteran's Day, the VOCAL*members were in full swing, assisting with several service events, all with the goal of providing aid to veterans in different fronts. First, on Sunday the 10th, the Centro Sin Fronteras AmeriCorps crew assisted with launching Healthy Hood's "Get Your Mind Right" mental health program, with an emphasis on providing veterans access to mental health experts that they may not otherwise have.



On Monday the 11th, Veteran's Day proper, we assisted with three different programs: one in Kewanee and two in Chicago. In Kewanee, Etta LaFlora's team worked hard to help the American Legion celebrate its 100th anniversary at their annual Veteran's Day ceremony; meanwhile, in Chicago, our members worked with the Veterans New Beginnings for the annual Veterans' Breakfast, which featured an appearance by the mayor, and assisted the National Veterans Art Museum with their gallery preparation and workshops.

Finally, on November 14th and 15th, members helped work the VA Hospital's Winter Standdown event, where several nonprofits brought together resources such as clothing, toiletries, and coats to help equip homeless veterans for the winter. We thank the brave men and women who have given so much for their country and were proud to participate in this Day of Service.

Member Spotlight: Colin Herzog



Colin Herzog is currently a second year AmeriCorps member, who joined Literacy Volunteers of Illinois as their Program Associate and AmeriCorps Team Leader. Originally from Wisconsin, he came down to Chicago for his masters at Columbia College Chicago in Arts Management, and has since stayed, volunteering with immigrant community centers before joining AmeriCorps after being recruited by a mentor to help serve their organization. Before that, he pursued his undergraduate degree at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, where he majored in English and Communication Studies.

Now at LVI, his duties focus on acquiring donations, working to create synergy among the AmeriCorps members, and helping out on the administrative side of things and events; however the position has begun to include tech support and website maintenance. Among its challenges, would be coordinating members and making sure that other members or organizations follow up or make sure their paperwork is all in order. In addition to AmeriCorps, he also tutors citizenship preparation, assists artists with logistics and events, and playing. After the year is completed, he is hoping to get into city or state government and continue to help serving the people of Chicago, as well as planning events for Indian artistic events.



Literacy Volunteers of Illinois (LVI) is a statewide organization committed to developing and supporting volunteer literacy programs that help families, adults, and out-of-school teens increase their literacy skills. LVI is a leader in the national service movement and has placed over 800 national service members in over 150 adult, family literacy, and Head Start programs throughout the state. LVI is also the founder of the Jump Start program which, in cooperation with School District #428 of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, recruits, trains and matches volunteers to serve as tutors to incarcerated youth residing in the Illinois Youth Centers.

Member Spotlight: Galina Khartulari

Galina Khartulari is a third-year AmeriCorps member, currently serving with the Illinois Youth Center in Warrenville, IL. After moving here from Russia and settling in the western suburbs, Galina enrolled in DePaul University's College of Communication for her education, where she earned a MA in Organizational and Multicultural Communication. She learned of AmeriCorps while serving as a volunteer tutor from tutor coordinator at Waubensee Community College, who was an AmeriCorps member. After the coordinator finished her year of service, Galina stepped in and for two years served as the tutor coordinator at the Aurora campus of Waubensee Community College. She transitioned in September to LVI's Jump Start program at IYC-Warrenville, where she is serving as a part-time member.



A great deal of her time is spent tutoring the incarcerated young men and women at IYC-Warrenville. This is her first time working with younger students, having previously worked with adult learners, but she is excited about the opportunity it presents and getting to use different parts of her skills and learn different approaches to better teach and reach them. After AmeriCorps, she hopes to stay in the field of literacy and helping people. Besides AmeriCorps, she is a dedicated Do It Yourself believer, and she comes up with ways to bring her ideas to life or learn new skills.



IYC - Warrenville serves a juvenile female population with multi-service needs. The center provides GED and high school diploma academic services, an in-patient substance abuse treatment program, vocational programs, mental health services, medical services, clinical services, leisure time activities, parenting education, assessments and family reunification programming. The facility is coed - housing both women and young men

Member Spotlight: Carol Taylor

Carol Taylor is a tutor currently serving at Illinois Youth Center in Warrenville, Illinois. This is her second year as an AmeriCorps member, where she engages with youth in one on one tutoring. Many of her students are struggling readers and need to obtain their high school diploma. With her vast experience, she is excited about getting to assist her students. She is an educator, having taught public school for many years. She returned to school and received a masters in reading degree and as well as a leadership in education degree. She then became the principal of the school where she had taught and retired from there 10 years ago. After retirement, she joined the faculty of Concordia University, where she served as an adjunct professor. However, her highest and most noble endeavor is working with students who need a second chance to become successful.



As Pierce Brown says, "Man cannot be freed from the same injustice that enslaved it." She believes that it takes courage to open your heart and mind to the injustices we see in society, but we must open our eyes to it anyway. Change is needed, and by donating a few hours a week hoping to make a difference in the life of a child, she feels that it should start from within.

Upcoming Dates

Thursday, November 28th
Thanksgiving

Friday, December 6th
9:00 AM—4:30 PM
Quarterly Member Meeting at LiteraCenter

TBD
Holiday Party

Tuesday, December 24th
Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 25th
Christmas Day

Tuesday, December 31st
New Year's Eve

Wednesday, January 1st
New Year's Day

Friday, January 3rd
Member Training at LiteraCenter

Monday, January 20th
MLK Day of Service, Locations TBD

LVI'S SOCIAL NETWORKS



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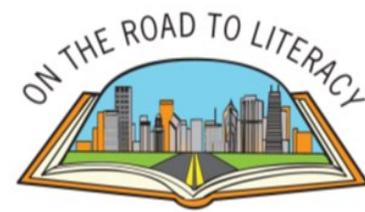
Join the VOCAL AmeriCorps
Facebook Group



Follow us on Instagram
[@literacyvolunteersofillinois](https://www.instagram.com/literacyvolunteersofillinois)

Mark Your Calendars !

29th Annual



Saturday, April 18th
9:00 AM-3:00 PM

**28th Annual Tutor and Adult Learner Conference
And Awards Presentation**

UIC Center for Literacy
1040 W. Harrison
Chicago, IL

Happy Birthday!

Belated Wishes

September

Linda Bolls 9/17

Temothy Potts 9/17

Janet Pilarski 9/28

October

Brittany Hetzel 10/15

Miriam Perez 10/21

November

Kaitlyn Cameron 11/10

William Leslie 11/12

Happy Wishes

Damian Neurnynck 11/30

December

Zilagi "Zee" Velasco 12/02

Olivia Terry 12/26