

Winter
2020



JUMP START

Eye on IYC



The Year That Was (Not) !

Just a little less than a year ago we gathered at Cozymel's in Wheaton to meet, greet and celebrate the New Year and all that it would hold. Little did we know what we were in for! That restaurant is now shuttered: a victim of the pandemic and the stay at home order. No New Year's Celebration Luncheon at that restaurant or any other is set for this year and we missed our annual summer outing as well. But while we may not have been able to gather in person this year, know that you're thought of often and we look towards brighter days when we might be able to mix and mingle again.

Along with not participating in public gatherings, many of your one-to-one tutor sessions have been effected as well, as the IYCs adapt their environments to account for the ever evolving conditions of the pandemic. While the IYCs are now allowing volunteers to enter, we very much understand that safety is still a concern for many, and look forward to the day of a safe return for all.

As you can see from our pictures to the left and tutor updates, with tutoring on a temporary hold, you've all found a variety of ways of coping. I thank you for sharing your information with us and keeping in touch.

Despite the current challenges posed by the pandemic, interest in the Jump Start program continues to grow and in just the last few months we received ten volunteer applications and as seen in the picture to the right, trained seven new tutors in our first virtual tutor training session held this past October.

In addition to no public gatherings for us, the youth too have not been able to congregate much so the Holidays were a little grim for them as many past group activities were put on hold. Given the restrictions, IYC staff have been looking to other ways for providing interaction with the youth, and gift bags with snacks and other goodies, for which so many of you donated money and other items, seemed to fit the bill. Thank you for those donations and for being a part of LVI. Here's to a better 2021 – Happy New Year !

- Dorothy M. Miaso, Executive Director

What have you been up to during COVID ?



Nina Massion got a new car !



Lisa Matsen adopted a new pet



Seven new tutors signed on for our very first virtual tutor training.



Spotlight on ...

Kurt Mohr, AmeriCorps Member IYC-Warrenville

“I joined AmeriCorps on September 1st after serving as a tutor at IYC-Warrenville for almost a year. I began tutoring because I was retired, with way too much time on my hands. Not having kids of my own, I really wanted to work with youth. I started volunteering a couple of hours per week, but found I really enjoyed the interaction with the students and my time at the center. I’ve gradually increased my hours and am now tutoring about 10 hours per week.

In the spring, we experienced a 3-month COVID lockdown during which we weren’t able to tutor. In our absence, I wondered and worried about our students. I knew the lockdown would limit their outside contact even more. I was thrilled in June when we were able to resume tutoring. There had been quite a bit of student turnover, but I was most surprised by the mood at the center. Our students seemed to have matured. They were more willing to engage, took their work more seriously, and generally seemed to appreciate the renewed contact. I felt the same.

I usually tutor math and science, although I help wherever needed. Math was always particularly difficult for me in school and I went to college ill-prepared for the math requirements of my chemistry major. I started in remedial algebra and took classes every semester (some of them twice). Because it was so difficult for me, I can often understand where our students have problems... the same places I did. Most of my teachers would be amused to think of me tutoring math.

In the last few months, my hours at Warrenville have become a high point of my week. I find the 1:1 interaction with the students so rewarding, especially when they suddenly understand something they didn’t before. And every day when I leave, I feel a little younger than when I walked in. I look forward to many more hours of tutoring at Warrenville.”



Interested in a Fuller Volunteer Experience ?

Intrigued with Kurt’s AmeriCorps service ? Enjoy working with the youth and have some extra time to spare? Join with him and become a member of LVI’s VOCAL* AmeriCorps Program. The central goal of the – Volunteer Outreach for Community Action in Literacy – program is to expand literacy services to at-risk populations by engaging individuals to serve as tutors and volunteer recruiters in community-based literacy programs, of which Jump Start is one.



LVI offers various opportunities for AmeriCorps service from minimum-time of 6-8 hours a week to a full-time commitment of 35 hours a week. A monthly stipend ranging from \$200 to \$1,200 is provided, along with an education award at the end of service ranging from \$1,300 to \$6,195. The award can be used to pay student loans or future tuition. A bonus - individuals over the age of 55 can transfer the award to a child or grandchild. Join yourself or refer a friend or family member. For further info check with your program coordinator.

News from the Centers ...



Greetings from St. Charles IYC and Samuel Sublett Alternative High School

Despite the pandemic, our school is managing to get quite a lot accomplished. In honor of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, our Lake Land College Horticulture teacher, Ms. Smith, facilitated the planting of two beautiful chrysanthemums near the gazebo outside our school, and a brief poetry service was held.

An Information Technology Pilot Program was recently offered twice a week for six weeks. The Program introduced the appropriate use of social media and how to create letters, resumes, and presentation materials. The capstone project allowed students to create their own websites. The program was presented by the School Office Coordinator, Mr. Tolkson; three students were given certificates of completion.

School staff, mainly our teacher Mr. Hentschel, presented several sessions on Civics, culminating with a mock election, held on Friday, October 30th from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. The polling place was the school library. Registration in advance of “election day” was offered and youth who were released were able to send in absentee ballots! Onsite registration was also offered and voting privileges were also offered to staff. The results mirrored those at the national level: Joe Biden was the winner.

For Hispanic Awareness Month, which runs September 15th – October 16th, we enjoyed some authentic Mexican food prepared by the mother of our principal, Mr. Zarco, along with an array of Mexican candy and treats purchased by LVI. Program Assistant Danielle Johnson provided an art activity to go along with the delicious brunch.



For the Thanksgiving Holiday, we held an essay contest, asking students to write about what they were thankful for and why. More information plus the winning entry is included on page ...

The STC Jump Start program was invited to participate in a book club/focus group offered by Liberation Library, a not-for-profit which provides books to incarcerated youth. Participating youth have been asked to read the book *All American Boys* by Frank Kusch (provided by Liberation Library), participate in an online discussion session and then write something about the book for the Liberation Library newsletter. If they complete all three steps, they will receive a week of “cut time,” meaning a one-week reduction of their sentence, so that is quite an incentive, as you might imagine.

A December book club sponsored by BreakFree Education – a national organization that provides resources and programming to juvenile justice agencies to make school relevant and meaningful - will give students the opportunity to read and discuss the book *Long Way Down*, by Jason Reynolds.

The census in St. Charles has been just under 40, with less than 10 students in school. Sadly, we have had numerous cases of COVID-19, but none have been among the Education Staff. Jump Start staff is currently working part-time in the school and part-time remotely.

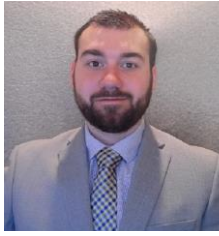
Even though these are trying times, 16 STC students have passed the GED since August 1, so progress is being made. Jump Start has been assisting with a lot of GED prep!

Last but not least, Jump Start has been assisting with a class offered by Northwestern University more on that to follow in the next edition of Eye on YIC.

- *Melissa Auer, Program Director*

News from the Centers *(continued)*

IYC-Chicago Tutor Recognized with a Governor's Service Award



Kudos to tutor Scott Milliman who was featured in the Volunteer Spotlight in our last edition of *Eye on IYC*: Scott was recognized in September with one of the Governor's Service Awards. He was nominated for the award by former program coordinator Alex Dunbar, who in introducing Scott in the virtual ceremony held on September 16th said in his video message - "It is the mark of the man that he would say that he was the fortunate one to have had this opportunity, but I can assure you that it's the kids and staff that Scott works with who feel particularly blessed. He's ignited hope, belief and optimism in the lives of so many kids and opened their eyes to opportunities they didn't even know existed, that we are the richer for having known him." The Governor's Service Awards is an annual activity of the Serve Illinois Commission that recognizes the outstanding efforts of volunteers in six categories – Adult, Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, Senior Citizen, Youth and Business in five regions of the state.

Hello from Harrisburg !

Things have been busy at Booker T. Washington Alternative High School. On the anniversary of 9/11, our students watched the movie "Boat Lift" and "9/11 Emergency Room" and were very impressed. Sadly, in September we had two staff members and one youth test positive for COVID-19, so we had to take extra precautions to prevent it from spreading.

In honor of Suicide Awareness Month students planted a tree and several shared poems they had written. For Hispanic Heritage Month our youth decorated the school with artwork celebrating the Day of the Dead and a Spanish Dominoes Tournament was held. We had several other activities for staff members, including a Boss's Day luncheon for our principal, Jamie Rheaume, a retirement party for a staff member and our regular monthly birthday luncheons. The daily census for our Center has been hovering around 40 youth with about 22 students enrolled in school. As I write this, we are holding school as usual.

~ Larry Durfee, Program Coordinator

Warrenville Focuses on the Constitution

At IYC-Warrenville, LVI Jump Start is responsible for preparing youth for the US Constitution which includes the Flag Code, and the Illinois Constitution. In Illinois, passing this test is a required to get a high school diploma. In the last four months, four students passed the test. One student thanked the tutors for "their patience" and said he appreciated the fact that we "kept pushing him to work harder". He described his tutors as both "determined and optimistic". Our reward was the student put forth his very best and reached his goal of passing the Constitution! Another student was also very grateful to the Jump Start tutors for helping her pass the Constitution test. Her parting comments on an Exit Interview we do with our students said, "I would not have accomplished my GED without your help". And added, "thank-you for all the pick me ups when I was down and wanting to give up". This type of feedback is why we are committed to the work we do at IYC-Warrenville. We feel honored to be a part of youth's education.



- Teresa Urfer, Program Coordinator

Saluting Our Military Veterans

On Tuesday, November 10th, IYC-Warrenville's Jump Start Coordinator, Teresa Urfer, and AmeriCorps member, Kurt Mohr helped facilitate a program honoring the veterans who work at the Center. The program was attended by the school's graduates, teachers and administrators. Four veterans, two men and two women, shared a variety of stories. One veteran spoke about his experience working on a submarine and the skills that he learned. Another spoke about the racism she encountered, but how in spite of that hardship her time in the military taught her discipline and put her on a more positive path. They all talked about the lifelong friends they made and their gratitude for seeing other parts of the country and the world. Another big plus was money for education through the GI Bill.

After the veterans spoke, Superintendent Mr. Ibrahim and Assistant Superintendent Ms. Alexander talked to the youth about considering the opportunities military service has to offer and the benefits of military service when seeking a state job.

LVI played a prominent role in the program, from initiating the idea to providing a beautifully decorated cake, as well as setting up and cleaning up afterwards. Judging from the feedback, the program was a memorable event !

AmeriCorps member Kurt Mohr had this to say about the program: "My main takeaway from all of the veteran speakers was how positively they viewed their experiences. Despite the challenges and hardships they described, they all indicated that their personal growth was worth the cost and difficulty. They seemed to value this over the other benefits, such as education, pay and veterans programs. As each spoke, their confidence and self-discipline confirmed their personal growth and how much they had changed from how they described their pre-service lives."

Over at IYC-St. Charles, Program Assistant Danielle Johnson facilitated a Veteran's Day Program featuring one of their very own security supervisors, Mr. E. Williams, who showed photographs from his time in Iraq and spoke with students about his experiences in the military.

LVI's AmeriCorps members at other locations also participated in a bevy of Veteran's Day activities from writing letters of thanks to hospitalized vets and those currently serving in war zones abroad, to participating in the virtual opening of the National Native American Veterans Memorial, which is the first National Memorial acknowledging American Indians who served in the armed forces and dedicated themselves to defending our nation.

While Jump Start did not provide Veterans Day programming at IYC-Harrisburg, Larry Durfee, Jump Start program coordinator, is a proud veteran who we salute for his military service.

~ Teresa Urfer, Program Coordinator Warrenville IYC

Veterans Day originated as "Armistice Day" on November 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. This date was chosen in honor of the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" of 1918, which signaled the end of the war Congress passed a resolution in 1926 to make the day an annual observance and in 1938 it was made a national holiday. In 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation to change the name from Armistice Day to Veterans Day to honor all those who served the country in war or peace. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans - living or dead - but provides us with the opportunity to recognize especially the valor of those living.

What Are You Thankful For and Why? - St. Charles Essay Contest

To help get students in the spirit of the holidays and to improve their writing in the process, a Thanksgiving themed writing contest was held at IYC-STC during the month of November. Students were asked to write an essay, of at least 8 lines, responding to the prompt: “What are you thankful for and why?” Six students submitted essays for the contest. Essays were rated by four judges based on content, spelling and grammar, and neatness of handwriting. All youth who entered received a certificate and a candy bar and the winner received a special lunch from McDonalds. All essays were excellent, but there could only be one winner.

I'm thankful for many things. I'm most thankful for the people in my life who've refused to give up on me despite my insubordinance. Who've continued to support me even after I've gave them every reason not to. I'm thankful that they didn't give up on me even when I gave up on myself. Weirdly enough, I'm also thankful for my past and rough childhood. Even though I've missed out on some prime times in my life, I've experienced firsthand reasons why you shouldn't do certain things. I know it might sound funny, but my experiences now, that I've learned from are far less severe from the ones I probably would have had if I didn't learn from the ones I had earlier in life.

I'm also thankful for people who's lives aren't as easy as mine, because when I look at them and look at me, it helps me realize that things could be worse and I'm thankful that they're not. I'm also thankful for everyone who showed me who I don't want to be. I'm especially thankful to be alive even after all the time I have put myself in situations for me to have my life taken from me. I'm also really thankful that the people and environment I grew up around raised me to be so understanding and humble because out of my 18 years of living I've noticed that being humble is one of the best things you can be. That's what I'm thankful for. By M.L.

Tutor Perspective: Volunteering in the Time of COVID

This is all new to me – an unfamiliar environment and my first experience as a tutor. I'm just a few weeks in as a new volunteer with Jumpstart at IYC-St. Charles and I'm excited to be part of this work.

I'm impressed with the dedication of staff and how easy they have made this process of orientation. They remind me that flexibility is key and I'm OK with that. I'll grasp more and acclimate to this learning environment as the weeks and months go by, grateful for their help.

I'm impressed with the students because even behind the masks protecting us from COVID-19, I see their interest to move ahead. To prep for their GED, to read and understand more words, to make progress. Ninety minutes of tutoring doesn't feel like a long time but I'll answer questions and guide them through the material, hoping for a step forward.

Even in these few short weeks, I've seen a few a-ha moments: wrestling with converting fractions to decimals (and winning), understanding the meaning of alliteration (it helped that another tutor was wearing a Dunkin Donuts hat), and taking the time to talk through a potential career path. I love that sometimes their answers are earnest and hopeful. I imagine that their lives might not often feel that way.

I still have a lot to learn but I'm grateful for the opportunity and look forward to lots of tutoring ahead.

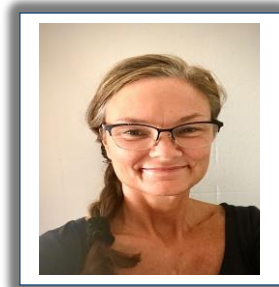
- Jill Taylor, New Tutor, IYC-St. Charles



Tutor Updates – How Has the Pandemic Affected You ?

Trixie Kelleghan, IYC-Chicago

I am spending a lot of time on the phone, calling my son and family regularly. I teach online, special ed for a Chicago Public Elementary School, and it is hard to get students to sit at the computer all day. I like to take walks and bike rides and I enjoy listening to lectures through the Illinois Science Council and Chicago Field Museum Meetups. I also enjoy watching the Chicago Shakespeare Theater director give free coaching to actors through a program titled “Speak the Speech.” Knowing that a vaccine is imminent, I assure myself with thoughts of spring and how wonderful it will be to hug my family and friends.

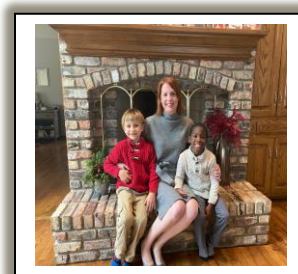


Nina Massion, IYC-St. Charles

“I am staying busy with school! We are going on a pause starting 11/30 for a week. I’m hoping it’s just a week. The most recent thing I’ve done is buy a car. Also, I’ve been binge watching the Haunting of Bly Manor!”

Lisa Matsen IYC-St. Charles

“We are hanging in there. We recently adopted a dog from the Anderson Animal Shelter. Her name is Hattie and she’s a 2 year-old Terrier/Pit Bull mix (see front page). She’s great, but definitely has a little more puppy in her than I was hoping! As for shows, I just finished *Schitt’s Creek* which is hilarious especially if you have a dryer sense of humor and then I also just watched *The Good Place* which was just great! The Queen’s Gambit is on my list as is Season 4 of *The Crown*!”



Frank Stilwagner, IYC-St. Charles states he is thankful for Zoom, for his eleven fraternity brothers who do weekly virtual meetings, and for the Livestream services from his church, Old St. Pat’s in Chicago’s west loop. He has been reading voraciously, including *Educated*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Tattoos on the Heart* and *Hope Dies Last*, to name just a few. He is very thankful none of his family has been infected with COVID – 19 ... so far.

Dave Swanson, IYC-Chicago – “The majority of my time is focused on my MSW program and a field placement internship. I am most grateful for the technology that allows us to provide telehealth services for our clients. My caseload is predominately clients who suffer from chronic homelessness and are a vulnerable population. My wife is inspiring as she is a Chicago Public School special education teacher who diligently logs in every day and provides a copious amount of socioemotional content and academics. My MSW academics have influenced my recreational reading and movie viewing. I had two projects that involved reading the books *Home* by Toni Morrison and *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, which lead me to watch the movie *Just Mercy* and an HBO documentary on Bryan Stevenson. I look forward to when we can reengage with the students. Stay safe and be well.”

Sara Vasicek, IYC-St. Charles

Lots of outdoor time - Nature therapy! Walking and taking photos of what I see. Reading (*A Gentleman in Moscow* is the best book I’ve read in a while) House projects & decluttering - very satisfying to donate right now! I am grateful for my family and how careful they’ve been to protect themselves and others throughout all of this. Being able to tutor again. Everyone who works to make sure that all of us have food and healthcare and essentials. For Thanksgiving my family has a tradition of taking a hike together. We didn’t have a family dinner this year, but we could at least have our walk.



Happy Holidays to all of the volunteer tutors, public and private contributors, AmeriCorps members, and faculty, center and school district staff who have supported the work of the Jump Start program this past year. Your positive attitude and giving spirit is truly inspirational to us and the youth in the Centers and we are very thankful to have each of you as a part of us. May your holiday season be filled with the many blessings of family and friends and may you have a happy, healthy and extremely rewarding 2021.



The Staff and Board of Literacy Volunteers of Illinois



Have You Bought Materials for Your Jump Start Students ?

From time to time, we find that tutors often come across materials that they would like to use with their students and purchase the materials on their own. We appreciate your generosity in doing that, as does your student and the School District. A reminder that if you are purchasing materials for use on our behalf, it is tax exempt and you can use our exemption letter when making the purchase. Copies of the letter can be gotten from Melissa, or the coordinator at your site.

Also, if there are purchases you made, or might make, if you let us know we will issue a thank you letter with the monetary value included which can be used as a charitable deduction on your income tax. Mileage can also be counted as a charitable contribution.

Holidays to Note

School Break

December 21st– January 4th

MLK Jr. Day

Monday, January 18, 2021

Lincoln’s Birthday

Friday, February 12, 2021

President’s Day

Monday, February 15, 2021

Check with your Coordinator to see if students will be available for tutoring on these days

Questions? Suggestions?

Or, refer a friend to volunteer ...

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