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State Hosts First Joint Agency Summit to Promote Intergenerational School Programs

Summit aims to get older adults in classrooms to improve student success & promote healthy lifestyles

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department on Aging today are co-hosting the first *Illinois Summit on Aging and Education* to highlight the best intergenerational practices designed to improve student performance, increase graduation rates, and promote healthy lifestyles. Today's summit at Illinois State University in Normal will mobilize resources to address two critical economic issues: dropout rates and health. The goal is to come up with new solutions through intergenerational partnerships.

"We know that having older adults in the classroom positively impacts students' lives and academic performance," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "This summit is an exciting opportunity to build more bridges across generations to support student achievement and lifelong healthy habits. It couldn't come at a better time as we launch more efforts to improve the rigor and relevance of education in schools across Illinois."

One successful intergenerational program is at Naperville Community Unit District 203, which boasts more than 125 older adult volunteers who read to students and serve as mentors and tutors. The program recently expanded to incorporate a class in which high school students teach their older counterparts new computer skills. By giving the older adult volunteers access to the district's wellness program, students get a firsthand look at how good habits can benefit their lives.

The *Illinois Summit on Aging and Education* is just one of the efforts of a year-long campaign called *2010: Year of the Engaged Older Adult*. Governor Pat Quinn made the call to action to get individuals and families engaged in efforts to benefit their communities and the state. IDoA Director Charles Johnson is leading this statewide initiative that started when Illinois was selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) *Policy Academy on Civic Engagement of Older Adults*. The project is designed to improve the health and lives of older adults by increasing their involvement in service, learning, and work.

"We encourage everyone, especially older adults, to join in efforts in your community to improve education and promote healthy lifestyles through service," said Director Johnson. "And this historic summit will help draft an agenda and outline a plan of action toward improving the quality of life for people of all ages and helping to

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address critical social issues. The intergenerational partnership will create a brighter future for today's children and future generations.”

The first *Illinois Summit on Aging and Education* is taking place from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., on the campus of Illinois State University at the New Alumni Center at 1101 N. Main Street, in Normal. The summit includes a joint session of conference participants and policymakers highlighting the ways all generations can work together to increase graduation rates and promote healthy lifestyles.

For more information on the summit, log on to www.solit.siu.edu/GenServeGen.

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