

# Continuance

Knowledge and Understanding Passing from Generation to Generation

Summer/Fall 2014

## Generations Harness Civic Power



### In this Issue

Because News Matters Summit  
The Illinois Senate Sets the Year of the Volunteer  
Serve Illinois Commission Update

---

# Commentary

## Generations Harness Civic Power

The cover photo portrays four generations listening intently to information that will impact their public policy decisions. Their actions will stem from the critical thinking and listening that is the foundation of education and good government. The cover photo illustrates an idea brought forth by Gov.-elect Bruce Rauner, “Every generation brings a new set of skills and knowledge, and we should encourage cross-generation communication and civic engagement.” DuPage Regional Superintendent Darlene Ruscitti calls it civic power. “Civic engagement is a learned skill just like reading, math, science and art, and, as such, civic skills must be practiced regularly in order to develop proficiency, confidence and a greater understanding of how to harness civic power.”



Three themes in this issue of *Continuance* capture the impact of Gov.-elect Rauner’s ideas about the generations. The first builds on a remarkable project of the McCormick Foundation called *Why News Matters* and a recent summit, *Because News Matters*. News literacy, the ability to accurately judge information, is a vital communication skill for all generations and a prerequisite for informed citizens.

Clark Bell, who directs the McCormick Foundation Journalism Program, considers news literacy a basic life skill at the epicenter of critical thinking and listening. He said that the recommendations from the *Because News Matters Summit* have positive implications for all ages, especially students who learn to ask, “Is it news or noise?”

James Applegate, executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, outlines the second theme of this issue, the Year of the Volunteer. He sets the bar saying that “during the Year of the Volunteer, the Illinois Board of Higher Education will join regional and local leaders in connecting willing volunteers with opportunities to help young Illinoisans get ready to learn.” Dr. John Holton, director of the Illinois Department on Aging, envisions a year that will create opportunities to link the needs of one generation to another. For example, he said, “There

is a gap of 6,000 hours of enrichment for wealthy children in comparison to poor. We can affect change by closing that gap.”

The third theme highlights new ideas from the Serve Illinois Commission. Scott McFarland, executive director, says that only 27 percent of Illinoisans volunteer and the commission has targeted some specific ways to increase that number. Martin Simon from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices applauds Illinois for the Year of the Volunteer. “When individuals take responsibility for maintaining the social fabric of their communities, they make a difference.”

In the classic, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville praised America’s volunteers. In 2015 that spirit will enliven Illinoisans in 102 counties and in the neighborhoods of our great cities.

Hang on to your hats as volunteers across generations harness civic power!

-Jane Angelis, Editor

### *About the Cover*

*Four generations listen intently to information that will impact their public policy decisions for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).*

*Members of the ISBE and the Student Advisory Council from L to R:*

- Kayla Vonburg, of Carlyle High School
- Dr. Vinni Hall, Chicago, IL
- Christopher Koch, State Superintendent
- Gery Chico, Board Chairman, Chicago, IL
- Khushi Suri of Proviso Mathematics and Science Academy, Forest Park
- Steve Gilford, Evanston, IL
- Hannah Auten, of Benton Consolidated High School
- Luke Hahn of East Richland High School, Olney

### **Join in the Planning** for the Year of the Volunteer

Dec. 10, 2014  
Networking: 10:30 to 11a.m.  
Planning 11a.m. to 1p.m.

Chicago Marriott  
540 N. Michigan Ave.  
Scottsdale Room, 5th Fl.

Generations Serving Generations is sponsored by the Illinois Department on Aging, the Serve Illinois Commission and the McCormick Foundation.



---

# Guest Commentary

By Christopher Koch



*Service opportunities are important for K-12 students—especially middle and high school students. Service projects and volunteerism extend the learning process outside of the classroom and into society.*

Let me tell you a little bit about my background. I grew up in Brown County. My father was a dairy farmer and my mother truly valued education - that's where I first learned the importance of commitment to service and education. My mother also showed me that you're never too old to learn. At an age when most farm wives are ready to slow down a bit, she went back to school full time because she wanted to give back through her knowledge and expertise. She was in classes with students half her age, but they were there for the same reasons.

My father was dedicated to the farm and taking care of his family. He was a veteran, which reminds me that this year was the 70th anniversary of D-Day. Talk about service—that generation put everything they had on the line for freedom. Many of those on the landing crafts were just kids and knew they would not make it halfway

up the beach, but they were there to serve. They were a great bunch and the kids in school today could certainly learn a thing or two from them. But it's a two-way street. There aren't many World War II veterans left today, and we're using technology to record their stories to retell them for generations to come. These young folks are working with veterans to ensure that history comes to life in future years.

Our students are encouraged to use knowledge and skills gained in the classroom and to apply them to real-world situations. This is important because it is exactly what we are emphasizing with the new Illinois Learning Standards in math, English language arts and science. Students can see firsthand how they have a positive impact as they understand the complexity of problem analysis, critical thinking and cognitive development. Opportunities for volunteerism and service allow students to see how their knowledge and training can be applied to real-world situations and improve the lives of others in a meaningful way.

Combining academic coursework with opportunities for relevant experience enhances academic development, as well as prepares students to take up their responsibilities as members of a democracy.

We know that some Illinois high schools require students to complete service-learning projects as part of high school graduation requirements, and these can be powerful experiences for our students. There are also many student organizations that support

and promote service. Student Council and Future Farmers of America are just two of many. These types of service opportunities help young people construct an image of themselves as young adults who are responsible for sustaining their community's well-being.

Any number of studies have shown that service-learning results in:

- improved grades and attendance at school;
- positive social and self-perceptions;
- improved information literacy; and
- articulated thinking about civic engagement.

These opportunities are also important because they foster collaborative relationships between K-12 schools, colleges, institutions and organizations.

The combination of service and volunteerism is a win-win for those receiving the support and for our students. It's a way of giving back and will develop lifelong civic responsibility for their community and for society.

The Year of the Volunteer brings an opportunity for new momentum toward volunteering, service and civic engagement and strengthening communities in the process.

Christopher Koch is the Illinois Superintendent of Education and is a board member of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

---

## *Because News Matters: A News Literacy Summit*

*September 14-15 in Chicago was the setting for a national conference with the purpose to increase the impact of programs that teach students and all citizens how to tell news from noise.*



Four generations actively participate in the opening session of *Because News Matters: A News Literacy Summit* held in Chicago on Sept. 14-15. The opening session featured a student panel that was quizzed by Tim Franklin, president of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. The students were asked how they get their news. The answers didn't include newspapers.

### **Challenges for News Literacy Summit Participants**

By Wendy Wallace

**W**hen 115 news, media, digital and information literacy proponents gathered for *A News Literacy Summit* in September 2014, the news literacy movement faced a number of challenges. With no agreement even on how to define or measure news literacy, we knew we had work to do. We wrestled with key questions: Are the core competencies of news literacy a set of skills around the production of news? Or are they theoretical, an understanding of the role of news in a democracy? How do you define, measure, teach and embed news literacy in schools?



Summit participants in one of five small groups discuss how to measure the outcomes of news literacy instruction. Paul Mihailidis, center, assistant professor in the school of communication at Emerson College and associate director of the Engagement Lab there, and Diana Hess, to his left, senior vice president of the Spencer Foundation, led the group discussion on the summit's second day. Photo courtesy of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

The group agreed that for the sake of a civically literate population, news literacy -- however defined -- needs to be a part of young people's education. Summit participants saw demonstration lessons, from a mock news meeting to a Twitter lesson to a rap about credibility. One sketched a diagram to map news literacy among the other literacies. They ranked the outcomes that we seek in a news literate person and drafted plans for what could one day be a shared resource of news literacy lessons, research and curriculum. And they developed relationships that continued past the summit, as they committed to attend various groups' conferences and work together on projects.

The time is right for a coalescence of energies. The Common Core and "21st century skills" movements create an opening for news literacy

advocates to join with others and embed these concepts and abilities into the curriculum across disciplines. The civics education movement seems an especially powerful ally. Summit attendees remain in contact and must organize for the next steps in this work, likely to include participation in upcoming conferences (especially those of the curriculum planners, social studies and English language arts teachers) and the planning for a second, smaller summit to focus on definitions, competencies and shared resources.

The summit, funded by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and organized by the Poynter Institute, marked the beginning of a momentum shift in news literacy. The work begins anew now.

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation funded the summit through a

grant to the conference organizer, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. Poynter worked for a year to plan the event with a team of stakeholders from the American Society of News Editors, Baruch College/Harnisch Journalism Projects, Stony Brook University Center for News Literacy and the News Literacy Project. Supporting this event with travel grants were the Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

For more information on the summit, its outcomes and next steps, see the summit website at [poynter-events.org/news-literacy](http://poynter-events.org/news-literacy).



Wendy Wallace is on the faculty at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Fla. and was the moderator for the *Because News Matters Summit*.

*The Common Core and "21st century skills" movements create an opening for news literacy advocates to join with others and embed these concepts and abilities into the curriculum across disciplines.*



## It's Halftime!

By Clark Bell

In football, the halftime break offers players and coaches the time to analyze the game plan, evaluate team performance, and make adjustments to improve the outcome.

As the director of McCormick Foundation's Journalism Program, mid-September seemed the perfect time to reassess the state of news literacy education. As a field, news literacy is about eight years old and we have been funding it for four of those years. Moreover, our three-year, \$6 million *Why News Matters* initiative—a community-wide approach to news literacy—had reached the halfway mark and we were eager to share 18-month results. More important, McCormick was interested in finding ways for the news literacy movement to gain traction in the years to come.

That's the backdrop of *Because News Matters: A News Literacy Summit*, held Sept. 14-15 in Chicago. The 115 delegates represented school administrators, teachers, journalists, news literacy programs, funders, curriculum developers, civic engagement specialists and media literacy scholars. They taught news literacy, media literacy, and digital and information literacy.

Wendy Wallace of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies moderated the summit. She vividly recalls the attendees "spoke passionately about the education of young people. They agreed that today's teens need the skills of seeking and verifying news and information so that they can be informed and engaged citizens."

At the summit, it was recommended that news literacy programs:



Clark Bell is the director of the Journalism Program for the McCormick Foundation

- Join forces with the civics education movement to generate urgency for civic learning that includes heavy doses of news literacy training.
- Form partnerships with the National Council for Social Studies, National Council of Teachers of English and other subject-specific teachers groups.
- Identify measurable outcomes and show that news literacy training has an impact on learning.
- Engage in policy discussions that establish state assessments and standards to incorporate news literacy in those assessments.
- Create online resources for teaching news literacy.

The teaching profession and education system generally recognize the need for students to have the ability to read,

understand and analyze complex texts. News literacy fits nicely in helping students meet that challenge. "News coverage is by definition relevant and timely," one summit delegate said. "Using news information as complex text is a terrific way of engaging students and upgrading educational programs."

Journalism, news literacy programs and core academic disciplines have common goals in helping students prepare for college, careers and citizenship. Roger Gafke of the University of Missouri said leaders in news literacy should "create curriculum and lesson plans using journalism content that integrates with the core disciplines."

Creating a blueprint at a two-day conference is not difficult. In fact, what happens after the summit is even more important. Bonds formed at the conference that led to further engagement include Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy, the News Literacy Project and the National Council of Teachers of English sharing teaching resources for National News Engagement Day on Oct. 7. The National Council for the Social Studies is partnering with Newsela and exploring an initiative with the Stanford History Education Group. And Poynter is holding discussions with the New York Times Classroom Blog.

Moderator Wendy Wallace hopes that the summit and other news literacy research and work groups "will encourage not just smart news consumption of news media but also thoughtful creation of news reports—from Tweets to stories and multimedia presentations."

## Information and Democracy in the Internet Age

Excerpts from *News Literacy: Teaching the Internet Generation to Make Reliable Information Choices*  
Center for Effective Public Management at Brookings

By James Klurfeld and Howard Schneider

The great irony of our time is that there is more information available at our fingertips than any time in human history, but less and less confidence in that information. Rather than being better informed because of the proliferation of easily available information, studies show news consumers are less informed on key issues of public policy. And the problem has only become more acute with the explosion of social media and mobile technology. Winston Churchill once said, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.” These days, that retweeted lie can circle the globe several times over before the truth even gets out of bed.

While there is no doubt that we are living in the midst of the greatest revolution in communication since Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press, there is no evidence that we as a polity are better informed. Indeed, recent surveys show the contrary.

The consequence of this for our democracy is alarming. Without an underlying consensus on the facts—

on what we know to be true—we face unending dispute and policy paralysis.

A University of Maryland study of voter knowledge in the 2010 congressional elections conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org found voters substantially misinformed on issues from the impact of the stimulus economic package to whether scientists believe climate change is occurring to President Obama’s birthplace, to cite just a few examples. Said the report: “Voters’ misinformation included beliefs at odds with the conclusion of government agencies, generally regarded as non-partisan, consisting of professional economists and scientists.”

Among the misperceptions found in the survey:

- 40 percent of voters believe incorrectly that the TARP legislation was initiated under Barack Obama, rather than George W. Bush
- 86 percent believed their taxes had gone up or stayed the same while only 10 percent of voters were aware their taxes had gone down since 2009.
- 45 percent said most scientists think climate change is not occurring (12 percent) or that scientists are evenly divided (33 percent).
- 42 percent believed either that President Barack Obama was not born in the U.S. (15 percent) or said it was not clear to them whether he was or not.



James Klurfeld is a visiting professor of Journalism at Stony Brook University in New York. He was the interim director of the Center for News Literacy and helped create the course. Klurfeld spent almost 40 years at Newsday on Long Island, N.Y., where his positions included Washington bureau chief and vice president and editor of the editorial pages. He was a member of the Newsday team that won the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.



Howard Schneider is the founding dean of the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University and the executive director of the Center for News Literacy. Previously, he was the managing editor and the editor of Newsday. During his tenure in those positions, the newspaper won eight Pulitzer Prizes.

The survey also reflected a widespread perception of bias in the media that has too often poisoned any reasonable dialogue on the difficult issues of our times. An overwhelming majority of voters in the survey said they frequently encountered “misleading or false information.” Rarely has the nation been as polarized and unable to take any action to deal with the challenges that will face the next generation and the generation after that.

In a 2011 study, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that from 1985 to 2011 respondents who believe “in general, news organizations get the facts straight” fell from 55 percent to 25 percent, and those who agree stories are often inaccurate rose from 34 percent to 66 percent.”

A later Pew study from 2012 found that ten years earlier, 71 percent of respondents had a positive rating of 13 selected news organizations. A decade later, the positive figure had declined to 56 percent. In some cases, it dropped dramatically. The New York Times had a positive rating of 49 percent, down from 62 percent; The Wall Street Journal dropped from 77 percent to 58 percent.

The gap between those who identified themselves as Democrats and those who identified as Republican was even more dramatic. For instance, the New York Times received a 37 percent believability rating from Republicans and a 65 percent rating from Democrats. The result for Fox News was nearly a mirror image: a 67 percent believability rating from Republicans and only a 37 percent rating from Democrats.

The survey also found that the boundaries between news and advertising were rapidly blurring—by design. More and more news sites on the Internet – and in print and on television— were breaking down the traditional wall separating news content from advertising content, increasing the use of advertorials and “native” advertising, stories and video sponsored by advertisers, but not always clearly labeled as such (and sometimes produced by staff journalists). This was particularly true of social media, which is the fastest-growing area of the digital information marketplace.

Political polarization and skepticism of the press has predated, of course, the digital revolution. So has the spread of rumor and disinformation.

But the advent of the Internet and the explosion of social media have produced tectonic shifts in the information landscape. For instance, stories that go viral often prove to be untrue, but continue to circulate, sometimes for years. The classic example is the news account of New York City office worker George Turklebaum, 51, who lay dead in his office cubicle for five days before being discovered by co-workers. The Turklebaum story continues to be posted on news websites around the world long after it was debunked as a hoax (and long after it clearly failed the “smell test”).

Unlike any other communications innovation that preceded it, the Internet also has proven to be unique in the scope of its empowerment. All of us are now no longer just news consumers; we are all publishers and broadcasters. No longer is the barrier to mass circulation millions of

dollars to buy a printing press, build a distribution system, or afford a license for a television station. Now, it can be as simple as creating a viral YouTube video or sharing a news story on Facebook. Anybody can be a “citizen journalist” now, tweeting and texting firsthand accounts and photographs of horrific car crashes or unfolding revolutions.

Finally, the Internet has helped destroy the economic model that sustained a free press for almost two centuries and with it generations of “professional gatekeepers” who sifted through the news on behalf of the public, however imperfectly attempting to separate truth from falsehood. Newsrooms have drastically cut staffs, if not gone out of business altogether. Newspaper jobs have plummeted by nearly a third since 2006 alone, according to the American Society of News Editors. Over time, the gatekeepers have been replaced in some cases by algorithms and the wisdom of the crowd, tallies of ever-mounting “likes” and “retweets” that risk equating popularity with credibility.

Thank you to professors Klurfeld and Schneider for the permission to print this article and to the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University and the Center for Effective Public Management at Brookings.

## Is It News or Noise? Stories about News Literacy

For thousands of years, storytelling has been key to passing history from generation to generation. As a nation, we value the stories about our communities and neighborhoods give us an anchor in an ever-changing world. The following stories and photographs, informative and touching, exemplify the creativity of writers beginning with Alan Miller, a dedicated journalist and leader, and continue to stories about portals, internet sites, civic issues, basic reading and writing, and international challenges. Civic engagement flows through all of these stories whether it is volunteer journalists, community residents implementing good ideas for their neighborhoods, the empowerment of young people when older generations or their peers have faith in them or simply the challenge of getting a great story about a current issue. The following stories from McCormick's Why News Matters grantees document the importance of news literacy and recognize its vital role in education.

### The News Literacy Project

#### Journalist Fellows Volunteer in Classrooms in Chicago and Beyond

By Alan C. Miller



News anchor Cheryl Wills whispers a brief news story to a student at George Jackson Academy in New York City during a News Literacy Project (NLP) activity. The exercise helps students learn the importance of context and facts. Photo by Meredith W. Gonçalves

The News Literacy Project's volunteer journalists are an essential part of the program's success. During the past six years, our journalists have made hundreds of visits to middle schools and high schools throughout Chicago, New York City and the Washington, D.C., area.

I've watched numerous journalists teach students how to discern credible information from raw information, opinion, misinformation and propaganda. They are empowering students in the digital age by giving them the tools to think like journalists. The volunteer journalists' role has been at the heart of NLP's work right from the start. The idea for the project arose from a visit that I made to my

daughter's middle school in Bethesda, Md., in 2006. Then an investigative reporter in the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times, I spoke to 175 sixth-grade students about what I did as a journalist and why it mattered. I received 175 specific handwritten responses, telling me just where my talk had resonated. "You brought to life the idea of 'newspaper,'" English teacher Sandra Gallagher wrote, "and opened a new perspective of thinking."

This prompted me to think that if many journalists shared their expertise and experience and brought their real-world skills into the classroom, it could have enormous impact.

I was confident that journalists would answer the call — and they have. NLP has 26 news organizations and more than 225 seasoned journalists as participants. This group includes network broadcast correspondents, authors of best-selling books and winners of journalism's top prizes. Our journalist fellows have taught more than 500 lessons in person; remotely, through digital lessons and videoconferences; and at public events.

In the process, these journalists have shown our students how to use the standards of quality journalism as a yardstick against which to measure the credibility of all news and information they encounter on any platform and in any media. And they have given students an appreciation for the kind of verification, vetting and accountability that it takes to get a story on the front page or the nightly news — and for the vital role that journalism plays in our nation's democracy.



Kristen Schorsch, a reporter for Crain's Chicago Business, listens to seventh-graders at Pulaski International School in Chicago this month. Schorsch discussed interviewing with the students. Photo by Mieke Zuiderweg

They have brought real-world learning into the classroom and made the field of journalism come alive. Often, their experiences shed meaningful insight into politics, government, history and international affairs. These diverse journalists — young, old, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, male and female — also serve as powerful role models for students in scores of schools.

In the process, the journalists reflect a growing focus in 21st-century education on using outside professionals to open up the classroom and turn the wider world into a textbook.

Our teachers tell us that at they learn a great deal from the journalists as well and greatly value the opportunity to work with them. In turn, the journalists often say that they get as much out of the program as they give to it.

In our evaluation survey from the 2013-14 school year, 97 percent of the journalist respondents who made classroom visits said they felt that their experience was “very productive.”

“Working with students who are interested and curious about the world of journalism is rewarding professionally and personally,” a television producer wrote. “I get energy from the students as I talk about my work in a setting other than work. I value that I am able to provide them with knowledge, mentoring and encouragement.”



Allan C. Miller is the News Literacy Project president and founder.

## 826CHI

### Reading Is the Beginning of News Literacy



Catherine Galvan, 9, an 826CHI student writer, is all giggles as she tries to read her story at the Printers Row Lit Fest in Chicago in 2011. Photo by Nancy Stone

### News Literacy Pledge

By taking the News Literacy Pledge, you are making the commitment to:

- Uphold the ideals of news literacy as a news consumer or producer.
- Report news in a fact-based fashion, removing my own personal bias.
- Bring varying points of view into the conversation.
- Take an active role in verifying, understanding and evaluating information.
- Identify misinformation and offer corrections based on fact.
- Make smarter, more informed decisions.

## Local Initiatives Support Corporation - Chicago A Neighborhood Portal Highlights Local Events

By Carl Vogel



Energized managers of community portals share tips on social media, newsletters and other ways to market their work so more people know about the good news in their community. L to R: Fernanda Hopkins, portal manager at CoNnect (the Near North community portal); Jenn Hockema, the program manager for the Near North Unity Program; Rashanah Baldwin, portal manager at the Englewood Portal; Libby Juliá-Vázquez, portal manager of the Humboldt Park Portal; Luiz Magaña, portal manager of the Pilsen Portal; and Norma Sanders, portal manager of the Auburn-Gresham Portal

A community portal is a website dedicated to a specific neighborhood, with news, a calendar of local events, a directory, photos, videos and more. Moderated by a portal manager who maintains a lively, broad mix of local content, each portal is a place for residents to both learn the latest about their community and to tell their stories to the world. The purposes of the portals are to help local residents and institutions tell their story or reach their neighbors. When someone writes about what they want to see in their community, that's civic engagement, and the same for when a local social service agency or community group writes about an event or puts up their directory listing. The portals also cover voter registration, news from the local alderman or state representative office, calls for people to come out for neighborhood fairs, health screenings, school events and more.

Search the Internet for the latest news and information about many of Chicago's neighborhoods and it can be hard to find much at all—and what is available is likely to be

a standard crime story. Yet every community has many untold positive stories, from a winning season by the high school football team to a resident who has opened a new store.

Managers of the community portals from five Chicago neighborhoods met recently to discuss marketing techniques. It's part of an initiative to increase news literacy and bring more neighborhood voices and ideas to the network of community portals. Created as part of the McCormick Foundation's *Why News Matters* program, the trainings start with analysis of what the mainstream media writes about the community—and why—and how a reporter approaches a story. The second half of the program gives advice and encouragement to write for the portal.

LISC has sponsored a series of portal workshops so the communities can learn from the others' experiences. Some of the advice: use a steady drumbeat of posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Everyblock; include more stories that dig a bit deeper into local issues; operate a weekly e-newsletter that sums up the portal's new stories and upcoming community events; organize the content to getting the most from the mailing software. For the portals, like any website, any way to let people know what's available is key.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation - Chicago is a 501(c)(3) founded in 1979 by the Ford Foundation to provide grants, loans and technical support to advance community development. Since then, LISC has become a leading non-profit organization in community development, active in 30 cities and a rural program. It provides expertise, technical resources, financial resources and a professional network to neighborhood organizations working to improve their communities comprehensively.



Carl Vogel works for LISC Chicago and is a writer and editor who covers community development and urban policy.

## Erie House

### Internet Sites: Are They Real or Hoaxes?

By Monica Yuquilima

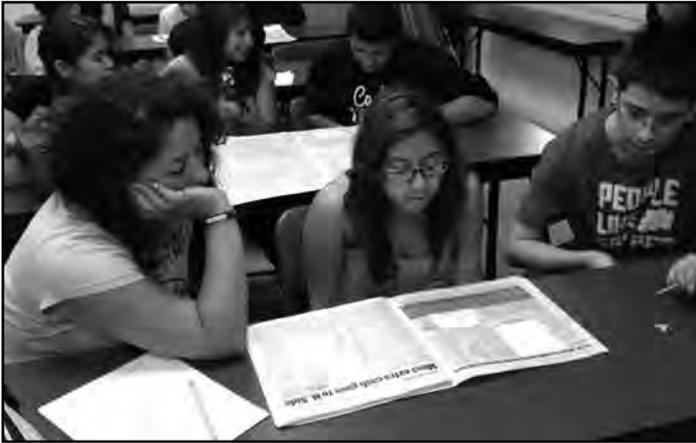


Image-conscious students at Erie House read newspaper articles in which the photos have been covered to see how the lack of visual elements affects their interpretation of the news. Photo by Riza Falk

When I was filling out the job application to be an intern at Erie House for the News Literacy Project. One of the questions asked to define “news literacy.” At the time I was a freshman in college and before that moment I had never heard of the term or what it meant. I tried looking up the definition online, but the term was more complex than I thought. But from the little that I did learn from that search, I knew that I wanted to learn more about it and I was hopeful that I would get hired as an intern.

When we first started to work on the curriculum, the other interns and I had to learn what news literacy was all about so we could build a curriculum that would be interactive for high school students. As I look back on the last two years, I can say that I have learned a lot. Some of the things I teach I personally use in my everyday life, but I still have a lot more to learn about news literacy.

One of my favorite concepts to teach is the reliability of Internet sites. Most, if not all, of our students know that there is information out there on the Internet that is not true. However, not many know how to figure out whether a website they may come across is reliable or not. The activity that we do with our students to teach this concept is to give them a list of websites and ask them to figure out which ones are real and which ones are hoaxes. We do this after we have taught them certain steps and made suggestions on how they can identify a real website versus a fake one.

It is nice to see that students are actually able to identify the fake websites on their own with what we have taught them. Even if they come up with a wrong answer, we as a group discuss why the website is either real or fake and the students give each other explanations on what they did to get to the correct answer.

It is a great feeling to have a student of yours come back after a while and tell you that they actually were able to use some of the skills they learned in school. When I teach news literacy, I don’t expect the students to learn every single concept and remember it. My main goal and my hope for them is to have a basic understanding of the concept and have them find something that they may feel really strongly about and remember it. Some students remember certain activities we do because they enjoyed them more than others. I am happy to know that my students took something out of these lessons and either passed it on or applied it on their own in their lives.

I am thankful for having the opportunity to be part of this program. I have learned a lot and have had the opportunity to meet and work with some wonderful people. I have also attended other workshops and had heard what others are doing with news literacy. I have come to realize that my generation has such an easy access to information. The reason I continue to teach news literacy is because I believe that everyone should learn how to be a good consumer and creator of information. I am glad that I have the chance not only to teach it to a younger generation but also work with Latino adults and even pass on the knowledge to my family and friends.

Monica Yuquilima, a junior at the University of Illinois at Chicago who used to come to Erie House for tutoring when she was in high school, is one of the four interns hired to help tailor news literacy to Erie House’s bilingual and bicultural population



## Free Spirit Media and Mikva Challenge On Youth & Civic Engagement

By Rachel Hoge



During the Summer 2014 Chicago City of Learning showcase, Free Spirit Media's Real Chi Youth crew shared their work and their storytelling and interviewing processes with guests. L to R: Crew members Grace, Kelsey and Carolina are seen here discussing solutions journalism and deconstructing youth stereotypes in media with Chicago Hive Learning Network Director Sam Dyson.

Young people are becoming more engaged in participatory politics—socio-political conscious acts through a digital medium – by sharing blogs and videos and using the digital space to call attention to civic issues. Free Spirit Media's Real Chi Youth is a civic/community journalism program where youth become involved in civic engagement and participatory politics. Youth produce news and media that is responsive and relevant to the needs of their communities, while developing a critical expertise that they take ownership of throughout the reporting and production process.

Real Chi Youth is unique in providing an interdisciplinary learning space that is flexible and responsive to the emerging media landscape. An example of Real Chi Youth's value came through an opportunity with a partner organization, Mikva Challenge. Their organization was promoting a mobile app to help youth expunge court records; the removal of such records allows youth access to work opportunities that could be denied to them otherwise. Real Chi Youth helped promote the existence of this app to youth citywide with the creation of a promotional PSA and memes, which were shared via social media. Collaborations like these highlight for youth the significance that social media can play in civic engagement and community action.

Rachel Hoge is director of development and communications for Free Spirit Media.

## Chicago MASH

### Can You Prevent Ebola with Salt Water?

By Brianna Pryor

Background: In recent months, Ebola has caused international panic. As the hysteria surrounding the deadly virus grows, people have become increasingly desperate for measures that will keep them safe. One such example, ABC News reported, occurred in Nigeria. Through social media, those at risk were urged to consume large amounts of hot salt water to prevent the infection. News of this supposed prevention method spread quickly by word of mouth and online sharing.

Social media tracking indicates that on Aug. 8 close to 450 tweets were sent on the subject. On the same day, Nigerian newspaper Vanguard News reported two deaths and 20 hospitalizations due to excessive consumption of salt water. As soon as the Nigerian government caught wind of the theory, it immediately released information explaining that Ebola can only be transmitted through direct contact with body fluids and that salt water wouldn't serve as a cure for infection.

Lesson: It's understandable that Ebola would cause panicked reactions, leading people to take drastic measures. Word of mouth can sometimes be even more convincing than the most reliable news source—it's hard to doubt something when so many people believe it to be true. But information relayed through friends (whether in person or on social media) must be fact checked before you can assume it's true.



Is it News or Noise? MASH reporters Damilola Ajasa, Laura Bartusiak and Raul Espana are preparing articles and strategies at the 2014 summer MASH journalism camp. Brianna Pryor is a MASH Reporter.

## Generations Serving Generations and True Star Intergenerational Summit on Why News Matters

By Michael Walton II

The Intergenerational Summit on *Why News Matters* was an excellent meeting of great thinkers that was highly valuable for everyone involved. The theme of news literacy was a great launchpad because it appealed not only to journalists, but also to people who would simply like to decipher fact from fiction in their daily news.

Two of the main topics discussed were the massive impact of technology and social media on news and the effect of the younger generations on the news. The different news outlets compete not only to be first to the news, but also to be the most up to date. Because of this incredible overexposure to information, it is now more important than ever to be news literate, and that is exactly what this summit stressed.



While the Boomers were boisterous, the Millennials were quickly on task. They started their discussion with questions about favorite songs or dances they had as teenagers, and leaders they admired. Then they considered questions that required critical thinking, such as “How can your generation spread the word about Why News Matters?”  
Photo by Mark Hallett.



When Illinois Department on Aging Director John Holton introduced the Boomers, there was a great response as they stood and cheered their generation.

### About News Literacy

News literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and information sources. It enables citizens to become smarter consumers and creators of fact based information. It helps them develop informed perspectives and the navigational skills to become effective citizens in a digitally connected society. News literacy programs also emphasize the importance of news and information, the value of reliable sources and appreciation of First Amendment freedoms.

*It's getting all of us together—parents, kids,  
grandparents, friends, aunts, uncles  
into this conversation!*

David Hiller, President and CEO, McCormick Foundation

“The *Why News Matters* initiative builds on the strong news literacy youth and teacher training programs that have been the core of the McCormick Foundation’s journalism funding since 2009,” says Clark Bell, director of Journalism for McCormick. “Since then, we’ve learned more about young people and how they access news and information. But we also have much to learn. In addition to our youth work, we hope to expand the initiative to engage broader Chicago-area audiences.”

The Summit was developed by Generations Serving Generations (GSG), a public/private partnership dedicated to promoting civic engagement across generations. Of the 103 participants, the Boomers had the most, followed by Gen Y and Gen X, then the Veterans and 2 for Gen Z. Generations is working with the McCormick Foundation to create a greater awareness of news literacy across generations and provide information about the skills necessary to be wise consumers of news and information. Through the Network of Networks, GSG is spreading the word about news literacy and why it is important to all generations.

Michael Walton is a reporter for True Star, an organization that supports youth journalism.

For more stories about news literacy go to the *Why News Matters* website, <http://www.whynewsmatters.org>.

## Summit Bottom Line: The Vital Connections between Education, News Literacy and Civic Action

### Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language

The descriptions that follow are not standards themselves but instead offer a portrait of students who meet the standards set out in this document. As students advance through the grades and master the standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language, they are able to exhibit with increasing fullness and regularity these capacities of the literate individual.

#### **They demonstrate independence.**

Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions. They build on others' ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm they have been understood. Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials.

#### **They build strong content knowledge.**

Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.

#### **They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline.**

Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose and discipline. They set and adjust purpose for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances, such as how the composition of an audience should affect tone when speaking and how the connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence (e.g., documentary evidence in history, experimental evidence in science).

#### **They comprehend as well as critique.**

Students are engaged and open-minded—but discerning—readers and listeners. They work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, but they also question an author's or speaker's assumptions and premises and assess the veracity of claims and the soundness of reasoning.

#### **They value evidence.**

Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others' use of evidence.

#### **They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.**

Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.

#### **They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.**

Students appreciate that the 21st-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.

Council of Chief State School Officers: Common Core State Standards Initiative: Preparing America's Students for College and Career. Accessed on 10.4.14: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/students-who-are-college-and-career-ready-in-reading-writing-speaking-listening-language/>

### Civic Engagement and News Literacy

By Peter Levine

Since 1996, we have seen substantial increases in political participation (2008 being the best turnout year since 1968), but we are more politically polarized than we were in the 1990s.

The youth volunteering rate has been higher since 2000 than ever before, probably because we have strengthened the infrastructure for volunteering and service, although some of that infrastructure was damaged by the recession.

Perhaps most importantly, we have seen the rise of online engagement (but, simultaneously, the collapse of traditional journalism). I am optimistic about people's creativity and motivation, but concerned that polarization and rising economic inequality will wipe out the civic work.

A person must understand the broader context in order to do effective and responsible local civic work. That is why news literacy is so important. We have been somewhat successful in putting more "action" and more service into civic education for K-12 kids and college students. But often their action is directed at immediately local issues, like bullying within their own schools.

It is equally important for them to be connected to the larger world that comes through news media. And of course, they have to learn to use their own voices effectively in the media.

Peter Levine is the Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Tufts University. He participated in the first National Commission on Civic Renewal.





## The Illinois Senate Sets the Year of the Volunteer

Sixteen members of the Illinois Senate sponsored a resolution that highlights the many contributions of volunteers and sets 2015 to develop recommendations and ideas on how to strengthen the infrastructure of volunteerism, civic engagement and service. The resolution was prepared by Generations Serving Generations, a National Governors Association project started in 2008 that is led by the Illinois Department on Aging and the Serve Illinois Commission. Cooperation and collaboration have been hallmarks of Generations Serving Generations.

Our state leaders may disagree on many things, but when it comes to service and volunteerism, they stand united. James Applegate, head of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, says, "This country has a strong tradition of successful progressive movements where thousands of people worked together over a long period of time to effect progress. We need that kind of engagement from people across Illinois to create an educated citizenry and ensure the future of this state. We hope that organizations across Illinois will volunteer to be a part of this effort."

Applegate sets a goal for learning, "During the Year of the Volunteer, the Illinois Board of Higher Education will join regional and local leaders in connecting willing volunteers with opportunities to help young Illinoisans get ready to learn."



### Senators Who Sponsored SR1002 and the Senate Forum on Volunteerism

Clockwise beginning at the top and moving clockwise: Senator Mattie Hunter (D) Chicago, who prepared and filed the resolution, followed by sponsors: Michael E. Hastings (D) Matteson; Pamela J. Althoff (R) McHenry; Terry Link (D) Gurnee; Antonio Muñoz (D) Chicago; Kimberly A. Lightford (D) Westchester; Leader Christine Radogno (R) Lemont; William E. Brady (R) Bloomington; Michael Noland (D) Elgin; David S. Luechtefeld (R) Okawville; Chapin Rose (R) Champaign; James Clayborne (D) East St. Louis; Don Harmon (D) Oak Park; Michael Connelly (R) Naperville; Darin LaHood (R) Dunlap; Senate President John Cullerton (D) Chicago.

The Illinois Senate is the upper chamber of the Illinois General Assembly, the legislative branch of the government of the state of Illinois in the United States. The body was created by the first state constitution adopted in 1818. The Illinois Senate is made up of 59 senators elected from individual legislative districts determined by population.



### Senate Forum Participants

Lower Level: **FRONT ROW** (standing): Melinda LaBarre, ISBE Board; Jacqui Moreno, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Douglas Brauer, Richland Community College, (sitting) Barb Byrne, Western IL Area Agency on Aging; Caitlin Closser, AmeriCorps Alums; Jane Angelis, Generations Serving Generations, Katrina Schroeder, United Way of Central Illinois; Joyce Gallagher, Chicago Area Agency on Aging; LaTonya T. Lumpkin, IL Dept. on Aging, **SECOND ROW:** Ciera Landolt, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Nancy K. Jameson, Everly House and Rotary; Jennifer Johnsen, Village of Campton Hills; Christina Spa, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois; Tori Collins, Volunteers of America; Kathy Engelken, IL Campus Compact; Nisan Chavkin, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago; Susan Swanton, North Park Univ. Campus Compact VISTA; Molly Hofer, University of Illinois Extension; and Dawn Davis, IL Dept. of Public Health; (Back) Peggy Luce, workforce consultant; Martin Makowski, American Red Cross of Greater Chicago; Cynthia Sandoval, Governor's Office; Carol Ann Worthington, Tri-Cities Faith in Action

**THIRD ROW:** Donna Treadwell, Springfield Public Schools; Barbara Turbekis, Volunteer Centers of Illinois; Patrick Harrison and Russ Marineau, District 203 HURRAH Program; Austin M. Hansen, ISBE Student Advisory Council; Jonathan Lackland, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Deb Strauss, IL PTA and P-20 Council; Jill Doub, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum; Joy Paeth, Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois; Calen Sweatman, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois; **FOURTH ROW:** Frederick D. Nettles, IDHS; Louis W. Kosiba, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund; Brandon Bodor, Serve Illinois Commission; Rev. Tony Pierce, Heaven's View Christian Fellowship; Dan Hagerty, Nat'l Louis Univ. Campus Compact VISTA; and Courtney C. Abbott, Americorps/Serve Illinois. **NOT PICTURED:** John K. Holton, IL Dept. on Aging; Jennifer Choi, McCormick Foundation; Lilliane Webb, Serve Illinois; Don Baden, Serve Illinois; Sulema Perez, Northeastern Illinois University; Bob Haisman, Retiree; James L. Applegate, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Barry Locher, Illinois Press Association; Sup't Christopher Koch, Illinois State Board of Edu-

cation; Micah Roderick, Donors Forum; Scott McFarland, Serve Illinois Commission; Lanie Cooper, Serve Illinois Commission; Karla Kunzeman, Serve Illinois; Julie Dirksen, Community Volunteer; Taylor Shelton, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Barbara Lestikow, LUDA and Benedictine University; Rosie Drumgoole, Chicago Cares; Tammy Potts, Illinois Reading Council; Julie Hoffman, Illinois Reading Council; Tracey McCusker; Candice D. Trees, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Bob Dwyer, Executive Service Corps; Erica Austin, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; Bryonnie Houston, UI Springfield Campus Compact VISTA; Meredith Weber, Chicago Cares; John Hosteny, Corporation for National and Community Service; Joseph Mason, Illinois Dept. on Aging; and Michael McMahon, Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

A hearty thank you to Lilliane Webb, Civic Engagement Fellow; Cynthia Sandoval, Fellow, Courtney Abbott, and Lanie Cooper, who contributed their special touches to the Senate Forum.

A photo by Craig Miller

## Illinois Senators Applaud Volunteers



Senate President John Cullerton greets members of Generations Serving Generations during a brainstorming session about the Year of the Volunteer. L to R: Peggy Luce, workforce development consultant; Cullerton; Moire Corcoran, Serve Illinois Commission; and Melinda LaBarre, board member, Illinois State Board of Education



“Volunteerism brings opportunities for learning, addresses community needs and brings a spirit of involvement to a community. That is why I am working to convene a forum to provide recommendations on strengthening the infrastructure of volunteerism throughout the state of Illinois. I have found that one of the reasons more people don’t volunteer is because they don’t know how to get involved. The recommendations from this collaboration will provide the public with information on how they can become more involved and what opportunities are out there.”

Sen. Terry Link, D-Gurnee



“I was pleased to support this common-sense resolution. Volunteers of all ages, races and gender are key to our success as a nation and state. It’s just a part of the American experience to help out a cause that you care about. Whether you donate time, money or supplies – any form of volunteering is greatly appreciated.”

Sen. Darin Lahood, R-Dunlap

### Senator Engages HURRAH Volunteers

By Jen Hannon



Left: Senator Michael Connelly urges Naperville residents to volunteer in the schools. Right: HURRAH volunteers sign up.

State Senator Michael Connelly (R-21st District) applauded the volunteers that gathered for the first HURRAH general meeting of the 2014-15 school year in Naperville Community Unit School District 203. HURRAH— Happy Upbeat Retirees (& other) Residents Actively Helping—volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, readers and partners in our education process.

“The generous spirit of volunteers across America is the key to what continues to make this country so great,” said Connelly. “The essence and enthusiasm of volunteers has remained the same through the years. Volunteers are still the backbone of any organization—the people who we count on to get the job done while not expecting anything in return. Volunteers don’t always have the time, but they always have the heart. Their heart and spirit is what is especially worthy of being honored and recognized during the Year of Service and Civic Engagement.”

Jen Hannon is a media specialist for Naperville Community Unit School District 203.



“Volunteering is one of the most important forms of civic engagement. Volunteers develop their relationships with the community at the same time that they improve the lives of other people.”

Sen. Don Harmon, D-Oak Park

## What Do You See?

By John Sirek

*In preparation for the Senate Forum, John Sirek provided a reflection on civic engagement with a four-step plan for the Year of the Volunteer.*

Every day I, like you, start my day looking in the mirror. Some days I see someone who is energized and ready to take on the world. Other times, well, not so much. Collectively, when we—as a community, as a nation—look at ourselves in the mirror the view is similar. Sometimes we look like world-beaters, ready to take on any challenge. Increasingly, however, we look a little worse for the wear. Our problems seem enormous; our ability to tackle them inadequate.

In his recent book *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*, Peter Levine argues that we are the best and perhaps only solution to what ails us. While it often seems that our very own civic institutions are designed to thwart us, in the final analysis we, the people, are only ones who can take on those institutions and make them work for us once again.

How can we do this and where should we begin? I suggest we begin where we are, in our communities. How? Here is a four-step plan that is a simple way to start. **Step one: Get informed.** Educate yourself. Everyone has opinions. If we are to affect change, those opinions need to be grounded in facts. **Two: Connect with others in your community.** We cannot tackle today's problems on our own. We must work together. **Third: Take action.** Nothing will actually change until we do something to make it happen. **Four: Celebrate.** Celebrate the victories, the defeats. Celebrate the

Thoughts from James Applegate, executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education:



"It will take a village to achieve the audacious education goals we have set for Illinois. This country has a strong tradition of successful progressive movements

where thousands of people worked together over a long period of time to effect progress. We need that kind of engagement from people across Illinois to create an educated citizenry and ensure the future of this state. We hope that organizations across Illinois will volunteer to be a part of this effort."

Applegate sets a goal for learning: "During the Year of the Volunteer, the Illinois Board of Higher Education will join regional and local leaders in connecting willing volunteers with opportunities to help young Illinoisans." get ready to learn."



John Sirek is civics program director for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and a pioneer member of Generations Serving Generations, a group convened by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

fight. Wins can be few and far between and they usually don't happen overnight. But small victories are had each and every time we engage.

This year 17-year-olds who would be 18 on Election Day in November were given the right to vote in primary elections. Students and teachers at Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire led the fight to pass "Suffrage at 17." They had been working on this unsuccessfully for years. But they kept trying. Finally, last summer, Gov. Pat Quinn signed the legislation into law on their campus. Educate, engage, act and celebrate. When the people at Stevenson High School look in the mirror, they see world-beaters. What do you see?

## Incubating Ideas During the Senate Forum



Four generations put their heads together during the Senate Forum held in June. Co-chairs John Holton, a Baby Boomer who is the director of the Illinois Department on Aging, and Brandon Bodor, a Millennial who is the executive director of the Serve Illinois Commission, welcomed the group. The speakers talked about their experiences and involvement with service as part of their family and community histories and explored ideas based on Senate Resolution 1002, which sets volunteerism as the highlight for 2015.

Holton referred to the four generations present and said, “A silver tsunami, populated by the aging cohort of Baby Boomers, is hitting our economic shores.” He said that the impact of older generations on our economy will be unprecedented, yet brings new options and possibilities embedded in inter-generational volunteerism. “We have to create opportunities today to link the needs of one generation to another.” For example, he said, “There is a gap of 6,000 hours of enrichment for wealthy children in comparison to poor. We can affect change by closing that gap.” Bodor talked about the benefits and responsibilities with service. “Democracy to be successful is not a passive activity; it requires service and civic engagement by an informed and motivated citizenry. Success in 2015 looks like an Illinois where leaders consider service and volunteerism a solution—at least a part of the strategy—toward solving our most pressing problems throughout the state,” he said.

Superintendent Christopher Koch of the Illinois State Board of Education talked about his commitment to service that began with the example of his parents. He said that his father’s service in the military provided an idea for encouraging written stories by high school students about the courage of veterans. He said, “Service projects and volunteerism extend the learning process outside of the classroom and into society.” James Applegate, executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, talked about his experiences growing up in a small community in Kentucky. He said that it is our responsibility as a citizen to do public good. Applegate proposed three considerations for 2015: Service must have a purpose; service means a commitment to lifelong learning; service requires measuring progress and adapting to change.

Kathy Engelken, executive director of Illinois Campus Compact, emphasized the importance of service-learning and pointed to the spiritual context of service. According to the Corporation for National Service, more volunteers participate in programs through faith-based organizations than any other model. Lilliane Webb, Volunteer Engagement Fellow for the Serve Illinois Commission, highlighted Cities of Service, a program that invites mayors to declare their communities committed to service. Illinois currently has 41 Cities of Service.

Jennifer Choi, program officer with the McCormick Foundation, referred to her experiences as a teacher and the importance of communication and news literacy, another important theme for 2015. Choi spoke about the challenge to engage young people in solving community problems. Louis Kosiba, executive director of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund, summarized the morning’s discussions and challenged the group. He said, “In 2015, we need to raise awareness about the needs and resources of Illinoisans. This requires an energized communications effort and a structure that will make volunteering accessible, easy to undertake and rewarding.”

Speakers pictured on the left: (Top) John Holton, Illinois Department on Aging; Brandon Bodor, Serve Illinois Commission; Christopher Koch, Illinois State Board of Education; James Applegate, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Kathy Engelken, Illinois Campus Compact; Lilliane Webb, Serve Illinois Commission; Jennifer Choi, Robert R. McCormick Foundation; and Louis Kosiba, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund.

## Senate Forum Recommendations: Barriers and Solutions

Just over 27 percent of Illinoisans volunteer, which places the state 27th among the 50 states and Washington, D.C., according to a yearly study by the Corporation for National and Community Service. How could Illinois increase the number to 30 percent or 35 percent or 40 percent?

Eight discussion groups considered two parameters -- the barriers to service and the solutions to the challenges. For example, the group headed by Deb Strauss of the Illinois PTA and Courtney Abbott of the Serve Illinois Commission asked about getting volunteers in the door, but then not retaining them. More than one-third of all volunteers don't continue.

### Imagine an Infrastructure of Service in Your Community

By John Hosteny

I envision a series of small, practical steps that every community and every person can adopt. These small steps begin to build a culture or expectation of service and civic engagement. It might look like this:

1. Perhaps the first step is simply agreeing that when people come together, good things happen.
2. Individual communities are responsible for defining how they will communicate, how they will build capacity to become sustainable, etc.
3. Give yourself a deadline.
4. Offer communities a chance to brag about their successes by creating a platform of best practices. Facebook is cheap, accessible to all, self-regulated, etc.
5. Use community networks and resources to help people reflect.

If you need a framework, use the *Cities of Service Playbook and Resource Guide*, a concise blueprint for organizing community activities.

John Hosteny is the Illinois director of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

What is the cost of volunteering? Economic factors were woven throughout a discussion led by Joy Paeth of AAA of Southwestern Illinois and Lanie Cooper with the Serve Illinois Commission. For example, background checks are costly and people often don't understand their importance.

Likewise, the research on service and service-learning highlights the success of students who volunteer. The group, chaired by Kathy Engelken of Illinois Campus Compact and Nisan Chavkin of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, talked about service plans in communities and on campuses and the importance of an anchor or convener. Will universities and community colleges step up to the plate?

Katrina Schroeder of United Way reported on measuring the number of hours and the number of volunteers. Likewise, the group led by Joyce Gallagher with the Chicago AAA and Doug Brauer of Richland Community College considered the impact.

A common barrier is the lack of training for volunteers. The expectations of the volunteer program and specific positions or job descriptions for volunteers must be defined, according to the group chaired by Fred Nettles of Partners for Hope and Donna Treadwell with Real Men Read.

Connecting organizations was a theme considered by the group chaired by the Rev. Tony Pierce of Heaven's View Christian Fellowship and LaTonya Lumpkin, of the Illinois Dept. on Aging. Jennifer Johnsen of the Village of Campton Hills spoke about the experiences with Cities of Service and how collaboration between volunteer organizations is part of the solution.

One of the barriers discussed by Jonathan Lackland of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and Dan Hagerty with Illinois Campus Compact and National Louis University is lack of motivation. Often volunteers need to know, "What's in it for me?" The group's response to this challenge is to take a page from the "get out the vote" campaign.

Last, there is a lot of confusion about the terminology associated with service, civic engagement and volunteerism, according to the group led by Barbara Tubekis of the Volunteer Centers of Illinois and Austin Hansen of the ISBE Student Advisory Committee. Clearly, a definitive description of the words and terms associated with volunteering is a high priority for 2015.

## Preparing for the Year of the Volunteer

### DuPage Engaged: Helping Those Who Want to Help

Inspire. Educate. Engage.

Members of the DuPage Engaged Coalition will use that three-pronged approach to help county residents become more aware of the incredible value that volunteers bring to the community—and of the ways that they can share their own talents through civic engagement during the Year of the Volunteer.

The coalition, headed up by the DuPage County Regional Office of Education (ROE), will spotlight volunteer work being performed in its network: Schools and educational groups, libraries, faith-based communities, and other local organizations. Later this fall, the group will contact network members to remind them about the Year of the Volunteer and encourage them to step up volunteer efforts in their own communities. “There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to volunteering,” says Regional Superintendent Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, “and we know that people know the needs of their own communities the best.”

In 2015, the group will spotlight individual projects throughout the county. While a variety of media will be used—print, local television, podcasts, live events—the goal will be the same: Provide



DuPage Regional Superintendent Darlene Ruscitti speaks during a Senate Forum.

practical, hands-on opportunities and resources to show people how they can help. Each project will offer a template for involvement, says Dr. Ruscitti, describing the project’s background and purpose, how it uses volunteers, and what residents can do to get involved. “They may choose to get involved in that project, create a similar program in their own communities—or get inspired to try something completely new,” says Dr. Ruscitti. “Whichever path they choose, DuPage Engaged wants to give them the information they need to put their talents to work.”

*While a variety of media will be used—print, local television, podcasts, live events—the goal will be the same: Provide practical, hands-on opportunities and resources to show people how they can help.*

### Plans for IMRF

By Louis Kosiba

As a public pension plan with 173,000 working members and 107,000 retirees, the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) is in a unique position to encourage members and retirees to consider volunteering in their communities. Illinois communities have great needs and IMRF participants are a great resource.

In 2015, the Year of the Volunteer, IMRF will launch a major communication effort using multiple communication tools (newsletters, websites, Facebook, Twitter) to inform our members of the opportunities available to them. IMRF recognizes many individuals would willingly volunteer if they only knew how and where. Moreover, IMRF wishes to promote a healthy, meaningful and enjoyable retirement for each of its current and future retirees.

Research shows that a retiree who is engaged in her or his community will experience a richer life worth living.

Louis Kosiba is the executive director of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund.

## Working Together for the Common Good

The history of our country is based on intergenerational leadership—all ages working together for the common good. In disasters like Katrina and the tornadoes in Illinois, we see losses suffered across generations. And then the rebuilding begins. Sons and daughters, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, grandparents and great grandparents pitch in to help families and friends and as a result, the vitality of communities is reaffirmed.

The following volunteer programs enrich local communities and tend to needs that might otherwise go unmet. First, committed volunteers transport kids to a food program that helps combat local poverty. Then a Millennial in Chicago achieves her dream to preserve history. Another program targets the incidence of falls and how that led to greater independence for the author's mother. Still another features a program for veterans that trains special service dogs to help with PTSD. Last, a Foster Grandparent Program demonstrates the impact of older generations on young students' reading scores. During the Year of the Volunteer, Illinois will learn more about volunteer programs, civic engagement and service, and how they communicate with one another. The outcome will be a stronger infrastructure of service.

### Poverty and Hunger

By Al Riddley

Volunteers contribute in numerous ways both directly and indirectly in helping to combat poverty in communities. One of the most important aspects that volunteers raise is the awareness of need. To effectively start working toward an issue, there must be a level of awareness in place in order to create change. Many volunteers at Summer Meals sites did not know that there were children going to bed hungry in their communities. By volunteering their time, it allowed them to better understand the hunger issue and how to solve it.

At the 53 summer food sites the Illinois Coalition for Community Services (ICCS) conducted in 2014, we had more than 5,000 volunteers who collectively volunteered and served more than 20,000 hours. Many of these were unidentified persons who recognized a need and decided to serve. Without their assistance, education

and recreation programs for children would not have been conducted prior to and after lunch.

Riverton is a community where one retiree loads up to six children in her vehicle so as to get them to the nearest free meal. The hungriest season is the summer for many children because school is not in session and a hot nutritious meal is not available.

At the Hilltop mobile home park, one of four summer meal sites in Riverton, Kathy White and Jewel Richards have taken it upon themselves to serve meals all summer long. White ferries carloads of children from her neighborhood 1.5 miles away. Each site has its own take on summer fun and activities. This program could not be offered without the support of an amazing group of volunteers. Each day volunteers were needed early in the morning to prepare for the day and then another group of volunteers was needed to help serve lunch and clean up the site. As shared by a volunteer at one of the sites: "In addition

to feeding kids healthy meals, we were able to connect with the community through volunteering. When we say, this program wouldn't have been possible without all the smiles on children's faces, we simply mean, what a great investment of time."

To see a need is to hear the call to serve. If people want to volunteer, they must keep an open mind and realize that food is a basic need of all people, particularly children. For most, it is not in their nature to ask for help, so be gentle and volunteer. It is an excellent way to be a part of the solution to childhood hunger and poverty.

Al Riddley is the executive director for the Illinois Coalition for Community Services

## Generations of Us

By Kelli Bosak



Ralph, an older adult from the Atlas Senior Center looks at the questions for the oral history interview conducted by Daniel, a young adult from the South Side Help Center. They learn more about one another and history in Chicago.

As a graduate student at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, I had the opportunity to share my love and experience with the power of storytelling this past summer by engaging young and older adults in intergenerational dialogue on Chicago's South Side. Prior to beginning my graduate education in clinical social work, my experiences included a two-year term of AmeriCorps service at LIFT-Philadelphia and obtaining a B.A. in French and anthropology from the University of Michigan. Studying, living and working in Chicago brought me more in touch with the history and vibrancy of its communities and inspired me to create a project, Generations of Us, that promoted peace. I choose to interpret peacemaking as developing a strong network of interactive learning experiences and building relationships with people of all ages and backgrounds that foster an appreciation and recognition of the diversity and universality of human experiences.

Generations of Us was an intergenerational storytelling project that consisted of bringing together young and older adults from Chicago's South Side to share their personal experiences through oral history interviews. I partnered with two organizations: the Atlas Senior Center, run by the City of Chicago's Department of Aging, and the South Side Help Center, a nonprofit organization that provides many youth programs. Through this partnership, I hoped that the young and older adult participants would build relationships with one another in order to gain a greater appreciation for the individual and generational contributions of those aged 14-22 and 65 or older within communities impacted by social injustices such as poverty, violence, racism and the criminal justice system.

This project took place during the summer of 2014. In anticipation of the program, I created an Oral History Guidebook and curriculum that followed the six-step process of oral history: plan, prepare, exchange, preserve, present and reflect. This process is the foundation upon which each workshop's agenda was

built. To ensure that the participants would be able to interact as much as possible, I incorporated intergenerational activities, icebreakers, games, practice interviews and lessons on the process of oral history each day.

Approximately 50 young and older people participated in Generations of Us and recorded a total of 10 oral history interviews. The last day of the workshop was a presentation and celebration, which included playing short selections from the interviews, sharing personal reflections, playing bingo, and sharing a meal. Each participant received a T-shirt that said: "Talk to Young People. They know cool stuff you don't!" as well as a copy of their audio recording. At the celebration, one of the young adults shared her insights from the project by saying, "I am just so grateful for this because we can actually learn about history by connecting to someone who was there. It is so much more real!" The power of the story is real, and we saw that with Generations of Us on the South Side of Chicago.

Kelly Bosak is a Social Work student at the University of Chicago. The following is one of her favorite quotes.

"When the old are not allowed to tell their story, the young grow up without history. If the young are not listened to, we have no future." -Dr. Gunhild O. Hagostad

## The Matter of Balance Program

By Barbara Byrne



A Matter of Balance provides older generations with new skills to reduce the risk of falling in their homes or walking in the neighborhood.

**A** Matter of Balance is a Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging (WIAAA) and Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP) partnership that has offered an award-winning, evidence-based program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults who have concerns about falls. Participants learn to set realistic goals to increase activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors, and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance.

The outcomes that we want and measure are about increasing their activities, continuing to exercise and reducing the fear of falling and becoming more comfortable talking about it. The program teaches “cognitive restructuring,” that is, turning negative thoughts into positive thoughts and actions that increase activity safely.

My mother’s experience provides a good example. She is 83 years old, a retired high school math teacher who had two strokes in 2008. She also had several falls during that period. She is recovered mentally and physically, with some lingering aphasia. She was able to continue playing bridge (a great love), but had been struggling with finding a purpose. She was a lifelong volunteer and felt she was unable to do that anymore, leaving a hole in her life.

She was a participant in the Matter of Balance (MOB) class around the same time we were starting a tutoring program (through RSVP) in Warren County. She attended the training for that but was very nervous about trying it. The MOB class gave her confidence and during the mid-course review when we asked what people had learned so far she said that she had learned that she needed to stay active so she was now tutoring in the first grade. She started with one day of tutoring and has increased to two days a week. It has made a real difference in her life—the children have embraced her and she is a wonderful role model for her great-granddaughter who is in the first grade at that school.

Volunteer “coaches” are trained and developed to present the program throughout the community. To date, WIAAA and RSVP have trained more than 25 coaches and conducted 11 classes for 84 participants in five counties.

Barbara Byrne is the grants and program manager for the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

## Foster Grandparents Impact Reading

By Barbara Wolcott

The Foster Grandparents of Western Illinois make a difference each and every day by providing one-on-one mentoring, nurturing and support to children with special or exceptional needs who are at an academic, social or financial disadvantage. Foster grandparents help young children gain skills and confidence to succeed in school. By serving as positive role models and offering unconditional support, these grandparents make a difference every day in the life of a child.

What is a foster grandparent?

The title of “foster grandparent” is misleading to many people today. The foster grandparents make a service commitment to youngsters and individuals who are struggling with learning needs in reading, math, spelling, art and other constructive academic projects in public and private schools, preschools, day cares and Head Start classrooms. The grandparents provide personal guidance in order for the child or individual to grow more fully. The relationship between the grandparents and the child with special needs is a mutually beneficial relationship. During the 2013-14 school year, teachers reported that of the students who work directly with a foster grandparent 96 percent improved their academic abilities. Of those students, 21 percent improved to their grade level or above.

Kindergarten through 5th Grade Assessments/Reading

On a year-end child-impact assessment collected from 110 teachers in 19 schools, teachers reported that because of the dedicated daily guidance of the 60 foster grandparents, 215 of the 238 at-risk students improved their age-appropriate reading abilities and 23 of the students remained the same.



Reading programs are a perfect way to connect generations. Older adults see progress in the reading levels of students while youngsters gain confidence with a caring adult who is committed to them.



It is proven that children need self – confidence to learn and achieve. The Foster Grandparents help to build a child’s self-confidence by being a consistent caring adult in the child’s life. The 110 teachers reported the following on the year end child impact assessments:

95 students made a significant improvement (80 percent) in their reading abilities

50 students made a meaningful improvement (60 percent) in their reading abilities.

22 of the students made a moderate improvement (40 percent) in their reading abilities.

12 of the students made a little improvement (20 percent) in their reading abilities.

Barbara Wolcott is director of the Foster Grandparent Program at Tri-County Opportunities Council in Rock Falls. For additional information, contact the Corporation for National and Community Service, Senior Corps.

## This Able Veteran

By Michelle Rositch

"No more. I don't want to live one more day like this."

Days "like this" meant waking up alone, feeling isolated. Fritz Mihelcic felt he'd been made "general manager of the universe," and the pressure, the loneliness, the exhaustion was becoming too much to bear.

So he made a phone call. And he accepted some of the help he'd been counseling others to accept.

Mihelcic first became acquainted with This Able Veteran (TAV) at a VFW district meeting when TAV President Pam Largent spoke about the program. Mihelcic had returned from the Gulf War suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He was a lawyer at Scott Air Force Base and VFW commander for the state of Illinois. He was listening to Largent speak because he wanted to pass on what he learned to the veterans he served.

Largent described the TAV-trained service dogs and the Trauma Resiliency Program that was the core of the TAV system. The Trauma Resiliency Program, she'd stressed, when used in conjunction with a service dog specifically trained for an individual veteran, was producing positive results. Veterans graduating from the program were reporting unparalleled improvements in their lives.

Largent had proof. TAV has measured results from a clinical study conducted with research partners at Southern Illinois University. Pre- and post-test scores on the PTSD Checklist used

by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs showed dramatic decreases in PTSD symptoms in veterans participating in the TAV Trauma Resiliency Program.

Mihelcic had listened compassionately to men and women who, like him, had returned from a foreign war only to face new struggles. His interest in TAV initially was for them. But then he made the call that changed everything.

The call was just the beginning. Mihelcic underwent an extensive application and interview process prior to acceptance into the program.

It can also be a long process. Training the service dogs can take up to 18 months to custom train each dog for each veteran's unique needs and anxiety symptoms. The dog's role is to notice these symptoms -- before the veteran is aware of them -- and to intervene with a specific reaction. The intervention distracts the veteran from the source of the anxiety, which is often a trigger sound or situation. The dog is trained to insist on interaction with its veteran partner, helping to keep the veteran engaged in the present, rather than becoming lost in the past. It is in the three-week Trauma Resiliency Program that the veteran/service dog team learn to understand each other.

TAV is a 501 c3 organization, and as such, is able to return hope to injured veterans and their families by providing service dogs both for limited-mobility veterans and for those with psychological trauma at no cost to the veterans. TAV has pioneered nightmare interruption



Fritz Mihelcic and his service dog, a Newfoundland named Mama, learn together on the agility equipment. A core component for the veteran/service dog team is that they learn to trust one another. Mama pushes herself on the equipment even though it scares her, knowing if she falls, Fritz is there to catch her. The trust and responsibility that the veteran begins to feel for the dog are the tip of the iceberg—it is the "in" that allows the work of the Trauma Resiliency portion of the training program to be effective. It is the bond between the dog and the veteran that cracks the veteran's shell, and then transfers to other portions of their lives.

and anxiety alerts by PTSD service dogs; developed a Trauma Resiliency Program and life skills seminar to prepare the veteran to make the most of the skills of the service dog; and launched a study with Southern Illinois University's Anxiety, Behavior and Cognition Research Laboratory to study the long-term efficacy of the program. Perhaps most exciting, TAV has, to date, graduated four classes of veterans and service dog partners.

For Fritz, it was hard to face the demons that had chased him for more than 20 years. But face them he did. "Today I have hope," Fritz says now. "Healing is possible. Now I look forward to every day. I have resigned as general manager of the universe." Michelle Rositch is marketing director and vice president of *This Able Veteran*.

---

# Serve Illinois Commission Update

## Mission and Goals

The Serve Illinois Commission is a 40 member, bipartisan board appointed by the governor. Its mission is to improve Illinois communities by enhancing volunteerism and instilling an ethic of service throughout the state. The commission is accomplishing this mission through the support of local community-based efforts to enhance volunteer opportunities and the administration of Illinois' AmeriCorps program.

### Mission Statement

Serve Illinois improves communities by enhancing volunteerism and instilling an ethic of service throughout the state.

### Vision Statement

Illinois will become a leader in volunteerism in the nation, assisted by the work of the Serve Illinois Commission.

### Means to Achieving the Vision

Expand volunteerism throughout the entire state, connecting rural, suburban and urban communities, and integrating people of all backgrounds, cultures, ages and abilities. Embrace and promote the idea that everyone can recognize their ability and responsibility to strengthen our communities through voluntary service.

### Highest Identified Priorities

The following five strategic goals represent guiding objectives for the commission in 2013-16:

1. The commission will strengthen existing partnerships, while seeking valuable new ones, in order to close gaps of volunteerism across all communities.



Mike Stehlen, commission trainer, leads an exercise related to values during the Fourth Quarter Commission Meeting and Retreat. A Courtney Abbott Photo

2. The commission will engage in active outreach to gather input, build awareness, and carry out initiatives to elevate volunteerism in Illinois.

3. The commission will embrace diversity and inclusion, encouraging individuals of all abilities to join the volunteer sector.

4. The commission will explore and implement effective volunteer management systems to enhance community resilience.

5. The commission will focus on its own sustainability, and on maximizing the value it adds to partners and sub-grantees.

The commission increases and facilitates opportunities for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs to integrate the streams of service through webinar trainings and the five regional conferences. To remain all-encompass-

ing in our outreach and collaboration, we coordinate extensively with our CNCS State Office, and maintain representation on our Commission from Senior Corps, multiple State Education Agencies, our Volunteer Centers of Illinois, Illinois Campus Compact, AFSCME and universities.

The 2013 commission initiatives are described in more detail below.

### Regional Volunteer Conferences (Volunteer Management Network)

The Illinois Volunteer Management Network cultivates an extensive resource network of voluntary agencies, institutions and associations, small and large, across Illinois. The purpose of the network is to help address the primary concerns of these agencies' hardworking volunteer managers and administrators, including recruitment and retention of volunteers, local organizational capacity-building efforts, and ongoing training and professional

development opportunities for volunteer managers - in their own backyard and specific to their needs.

A key facet of the Volunteer Management Network is its grassroots nature. The commission believes a regional model - a local network of public, private and nonprofit entities in five or more regions of the state - in partnership with the largest state agency, the Illinois Department of Human Services, will provide an element of innate sustainability and a pragmatic problem-solving approach.

### **Organizations Aligned with the Serve Illinois Commission**

**Volunteer Centers of Illinois (VCI)**  
The Serve Illinois Commission will continue to work with the Volunteer Centers of Illinois (VCI) to enhance and enrich volunteer programs through the state. These partnerships will help to support volunteer manager groups, provide ongoing training through local conferences and promote volunteer opportunity databases.

**Illinois Disability Inclusion Team**  
The commission will continue to support the Illinois Disability Inclusion Team (IDIT) and its mission to ensure that people of all abilities can serve. The commission is extending the spirit of this mission beyond its original scope of CNCS programs, working to ensure that inclusion is at the forefront of discussions and decisions about service in all its forms across the state. As such, the commission has made embracing diversity and inclusion one of its five strategic goals for 2013-16.

**Generations Serving Generations**  
The National Governor's Association (NGA) Project on the Civic Engagement of Older Adults was launched

## **Transitions at the Serve Illinois Commission**



The Serve Illinois Commission says farewell to Brandon Bodor, (left) who has served the Commission for more than two years, and applauds the appointment of Scott McFarland (right) as executive director effective in mid-October.

Bodor is the new COO for Bunker, a not-for-profit, which is a program built by veteran-owned tech startups and aspiring entrepreneurs to create and conquer the business world through their ideas, hard work and strategy. Bodor said, "I am leaving the role of executive director at Serve Illinois, but will never leave the organization, or the Generations Serving Generations family. Service represents who I

am, and I will always remain committed to the mission of instilling an ethic of service throughout Illinois." For information, [1871.com/the-bunker-1871/](http://1871.com/the-bunker-1871/)

McFarland said, "From intern to now, my past eight years with the Commission have been the most rewarding of my life. I'm honored to be able to continue my work with the Serve Illinois Commission in this new role." An Eagle Scout and avid volunteer, Scott takes great joy from camping, community service and teaching. He was named one of Springfield's Forty Under 40 by the Springfield Business Journal and a finalist for the national Innovation and Leadership Award by the American Association of State Service Commissions. He is member of the Springfield School District 186 Board of Education. In his personal and professional life, he continues to live by his motto, "Better yourself by serving others."

in June 2008. Illinois was one of 14 states selected to participate in the project designed to improve the health and lives of older Americans and increase their involvement in service, learning, and work. Generations Serving Generations, a partnership with the Serve Illinois Commission, the Illinois Department on Aging and a group of 100-plus public and private organizations.

### **Illinois Campus Compact**

Illinois Campus Compact is a coalition of colleges and universities committed to increasing campus-wide participation in community and public service. The executive director of Illinois Campus Compact has been appointed as an ex-officio member of the commission and this appointment will further strengthen the relationship. Campus Compact and the commission will cooperatively develop a plan for selecting Campuses of Service throughout the state. This new venture of the commission will also involve the Illinois Board of Higher Education. (continued on pg. 33)



A panel of experts provides ideas about how to generate volunteers during a recent Serve Illinois Commission meeting. L to R: Amber Harmon, Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP); Kathy Engelken, executive director, Illinois Campus Compact; Sheila Merry, executive director, Illinois Mentoring Partnership; Jonathan Lackland, deputy director, Advancement, External & Governmental Relations, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Barb Tubekis, executive director, Volunteer Centers of Illinois; and Don Baden, vice president, Serve Illinois Commission.

### Generating Volunteers is a Goal for the Serve Illinois Commission

A common theme during the panel discussion was communication between volunteer organizations in communities. Panel members acknowledged that the Year of the Volunteer gives everyone new momentum for working together. Don Baden offered ideas about volunteer centers and said that “my long term goal is that we will help create a framework that will connect volunteer efforts throughout the state by the end of the Illinois year of service.” Barb Tubekis leads the Volunteer Centers of Illinois and that group has done great work to match volunteers with opportunities.

Jonathan Lackland offered an overview of Illinois Board of Higher Education and its statutory authority as well as the importance of volunteers to state government particularly with policy issues such as the P-20 Council. The council helps improve birth-to-adulthood education in the State as

well as develop strategies to improve the educational attainment rate in Illinois leading toward an educated workforce to meet the rising demands of employers.

Sheila Merry of the Illinois Mentoring Partnership identified several ways to partner with Serve Illinois, such as through the Corporate Mentoring Challenge and promoting January as National Mentoring Month. Merry also stressed the importance of quality in all volunteer management, but particularly in mentoring relationships because failed mentoring relationships can actually directly contribute to increased negative outcomes for young people. Kathy Engelken reported on the accomplishments of Illinois Campus Compact, a coalition of colleges and universities working together to promote effective civic-engagement and service-learning practices in higher education.

Amber Harmon called attention to the good work of RSVP, how the group works with students and at the same time supports communities. Lastly, John Hosteny (not pictured) reported on the Senior Corps and some of the changing policies at the Corporation for National and Community Service.



## AmeriCorps Members Pledge

One of the most important events for the Serve Illinois Commission is the yearly “Swearing In” of AmeriCorps Members. In September, Fred Nettles, chair of the commission, joined Abe Lincoln at the Old State Capitol for the event.



Fred Nettles, chair of the Serve Illinois Commission, shares a reflection with AmeriCorps members outside the Old State Capitol as Abe Lincoln looks on.

### *Winning Attitude* By John Maxwell

Attitude is  
It is the “advance man” of our true selves.  
Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward.  
It is our best friend or our worst enemy.  
It is more honest and more consistent than our words.  
It is an outward look based on past experiences.  
It is a thing which draws people to us or repels them.  
It is never content until it is expressed.  
It is the librarian of our past.  
It is the speaker of our present.  
It is the prophet of our future

The commission’s vision is an Illinois where all citizens recognize their ability and responsibility to help strengthen their communities through voluntary service. It works to expand volunteerism throughout rural, suburban and urban Illinois, involving people of all backgrounds, cultures, ages and abilities.

The enabling legislation of the Serve Illinois Commission charges the commission to promote and support community service in public and private programs to meet the needs of Illinois citizens, to stimulate new volunteerism and community service initiatives and partnerships, and to serve as a resource and advocate within the Department of Public Health for community service agencies, volunteers and programs that utilize State and private volunteers.



(Continued from pg. 31) Cities of Service

The Commission is working aggressively to grow the number of Cities of Service in Illinois. Illinois is leading the nation with 22 cities whose mayors have signed the pledge, with more poised to join soon. The commission will harness this network of Illinois Cities of Service to share best practices, troubleshoot, pool resources and generally help each other better promote service and volunteerism at the local level. For more information about the Serve Illinois Commission, go to [serve.illinois.gov](http://serve.illinois.gov).

## Coming Soon: The 2015 White House Conference on Aging

*The Illinois Department on Aging and  
Aging Organizations Plan Events for 2015*

The White House Conference on Aging is an opportunity to look ahead to the issues that will help shape the landscape for older Americans for the next decade. Likewise, “The White House Conference on Aging represents an important step in working to ensure that Americans throughout the lifespan have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, make choices about their daily lives, and participate fully in community life,” said Nora Super, the executive director of the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.

The conference is designed to assist the public and private sectors to be responsive to the needs of a diverse aging population and to promote the dignity and independence of and expand opportunities for current and future generations of older persons and their families.

Generations Serving Generations will highlight the White House Conference on Aging by celebrating volunteers who address key topics such as a healthy aging, a secure retirement, accessing the services and supports older Americans need to remain in their communities, and protecting older Americans from financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

The White House Conference on Aging is a beautiful fit with Illinois’ Year of the Volunteer. The coming months will be a time for us to engage in a dialogue and build a shared vision on how to continue to maximize the contributions of Americans as we age.

## Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago Celebrates 40



Nisan Chavkin opens the 40th anniversary celebration of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC)

America has faced many important constitutional and legal challenges in the last 40 years. Since 1974, CRFC has engaged students of different backgrounds, cultures, races, and socioeconomic status to help them think for themselves on important questions that affect their lives. Although the students and topics may change, our philosophy has remained consistent:

- Democracy education belongs in our schools. CRFC works with hundreds of teachers every year to strengthen their knowledge, provide them with teaching tools, and create partnerships for them with lawyers, judges, and policymakers.
- Democracy is not a one-way street. CRFC is nonpartisan and prepares lessons and curricula that incorporate primary sources and reflect multiple viewpoints. These accessible, balanced resources present students from second grade through high school with evi-

dence and arguments from both sides to help them arrive at a well-reasoned conclusion.

- Democracy must be learned by each generation. CRFC provides students of all ages with opportunities to express themselves and to listen respectfully to others, to think through a problem, and to change their minds. CRFC programs offer support for students to put ideas into action and to experience the victories, defeats, and tomorrows of every democracy. They learn that everyone, including students, has a voice.

Prepared by Benjamin Gness, chair, Board of Directors, and Nisan Chavkin, executive director, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago.

### Continuance Magazine

Continuance is produced by Generations Serving Generations, a broad-based partnership sponsored by the Illinois Department on Aging, the Serve Illinois Commission and an executive team representing private and public sectors.

Editor in Chief: Jane Angelis, Ph.D.  
Copy editor: Ted Wolf, B.S., Journalism  
Project consultant: Thom Clark, founder, Community Media Workshop, Chicago  
Graphics and Layout: Jane Angelis and Katie Randall

Thank you to the Robert R. McCormick Foundation for the generous support for Generations Serving Generations.

*Founded in 1987 with funding from the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Expanded to a magazine in 1999 with funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service.*

---

# The Last Word

## Gen X: The Distinguished Generation

by Elwood Watson

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center earlier this spring focused on Generation X. This is the group of Americans born between 1965 and 1979. The report, titled "Generation X: America's Neglected Child," examined the attitudes of this age demographic in regard to religion, race, interracial marriage, technology, social media, politics, level of patriotism and other issues.

As a member of this group of Americans (born in 1967), I can readily attest to some of the findings.

To those of you who are not familiar with the term "Generation X," it was a label taken from the 1991 novel by author Douglas Copeland. During the mid-1990s, there was brief period of fascination with Generation X'ers. Like any other group of people, we were pegged with stereotypes that supposedly defined us. Among some of the more common traits ascribed to us are:

Individualistic  
Apathetic  
Independent  
Technology adept  
Ready for adventure  
Holistically spiritual  
Uncommitted to employers

In addition, we were also dubbed an "angry and troubled" generation. This image of despondency was furthered exacerbated with the suicide of Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain in 1994. For weeks, legions of Baby Boomer journalists, psychologists, talk show

hosts and virtually any non-Gen X'er who felt confident enough to exercise an opinion went into overdrive with unrelenting commentary on how Gen X'ers were troubled, angry, tragic and supposedly mired in all sorts of misfortune.

Truth be told, Generation X'ers are no more tragic than any other group of people. We were seen as slackers. In fact, this was the defining term used to describe Generation X. We were indeed supposedly lost souls. We were also the generation comprised of millions of latch key kids, divorced parents, erratic fluctuations in the economy, deadly transmitted diseases and sporadic wars. Growing up was certainly not blue skies and apple pie.

Fast forward two decades later. Now that those of us older X'ers have entered early middle age (45 years old or older) and those of us on the younger end are in our mid-30s or beyond, we have passed the twenty-something stage and have experienced many of the trials and unpredicted situations that occasionally accompany adulthood. A number of older X'ers have teenage kids or children in high school or are about to enter college. Those on the younger end are starting families or have children in grade and middle school. A sizable number (like many Baby Boomers) are childless.

The slacker image no longer applies. In fact, a number of studies conducted on workplace habits have made the case that Generation X'ers are resourceful, independent, self-sufficient

and relatively socially progressive. We are also generation that embraces technology and social media and interracial and gay marriage much more readily than Baby Boomers, but not to the extent that Millennials do.

While Generation X (46 million people) does not have the numbers that Baby Boomers (80 million) or Millennials (86 million), we are still nonetheless a distinctive generation. We are group of adults who grew up watching "Schoolhouse Rock," "The Electric Company," "ZOOM," "The Cosby Show," "90210," "Melrose Place," etc. We are defined by movies such as "Love Jones," "The Breakfast Club" and "Reality Bites." We are the demographic that includes Queen Latifah, Ethan Hawke, Van Jones, Ben Stiller, Winona Ryder, Halle Berry, Matt Damon, Molly Ringwald, Harold Ford Jr., Jimmy Kimmel, Edwidge Danticat, Jimmy Fallon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Joy Ann Reid, Cory Booker, Anderson Cooper, John Singleton, Rebecca Walker, Jon Hamm, Melissa Harris-Perry, Eva Longoria and others.

Such a diverse roster speaks for itself. If there is one thing that Generation X is known for, it is its distinctiveness.



Elwood Watson is professor of History, Gender Studies and African American Studies at East Tennessee State University.



**SR 1002: Resolution on Volunteerism**

**WHEREAS, the essence of American Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people, and that democracy reflects the engagement and leadership of all generations and the premise that citizens can serve; and**

**WHEREAS, throughout the lifespan, service instills the knowledge that citizenship brings responsibility and that everyone has talents and skills to make their community a better place, and**

**WHEREAS, service brings opportunities for learning that boost student success, focus on new skills for workers, and embrace the gifts of older generations to address community needs and bring a spirit of involvement; and**

**WHEREAS, research by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that administers the national service programs AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, revealed that 27.4% of Illinoisans volunteered in 2012, contributing 286 million hours to the most pressing challenges of communities; and**

**WHEREAS, research by Generations Serving Generations, a public/private partnership launched by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, concluded that many Illinoisans who do not volunteer would like to, but simply don't know how to get connected to service opportunities; and**

**WHEREAS, Generations Serving Generations and leaders from AGING & RETIREE ORGANIZATIONS (The Illinois Department on Aging, the Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund), EDUCATION (Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Community College Board, the Council of Community College Presidents, and the Illinois State Library); SERVICE (the Serve Illinois Commission, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and Illinois Campus Compact); BUSINESS (Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce); FOUNDATIONS (Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the Retirement Research Foundation), and OTHERS join together in supporting a Call to Service, therefore be it**

**RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING HEREIN, that it is in the interest of the citizens of this State to strengthen the infrastructure of volunteerism as a resource for meeting the challenges of education, promoting healthy lifestyles for all ages, and boosting the independence of older generations; and be it**

**RESOLVED that by Dec. 31, 2014, Generations Serving Generations, in collaboration with the state leadership in education, aging, service and the private sector, will convene a Senate Forum and prepare recommendations on strengthening the infrastructure of volunteerism and national service; and be it**

**RESOLVED, that 2015 will be set as a Year of Service and Civic Engagement, that will engage all generations as participants, planners, organizers and leaders of the volunteer infrastructure.**