



SERVE ILLINOIS

Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service

Spring 2011

MLK Day Presents Opportunities for Service

The 25th anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday occurred on January 17, 2011. This landmark event presented the perfect opportunity for Americans to serve their communities in honor of Dr. King's legacy. The MLK Day of Service offered individuals the chance to help others, strengthen neighborhoods, overcome barriers, and promote social wellness throughout the country, all while promoting Dr. King's vision for a community built on love.

This year's theme, "A Day On, Not a Day Off," encouraged individuals to use their day off from school or work to help their community. "During this day of service, people of all ages and backgrounds will come together to improve lives and move our nation closer to the 'Beloved Community' envisioned by Dr. King," said Governor Pat Quinn, at a press conference a few days before the event. "Through volunteerism, we work together to strengthen communities and put people to work."



Charles Stewart, an active duty Airman from Scott Air Force Base, leads a group of Belleville teens in a conversation about the power of words. The teens later signed a pledge against hate and established a group – The Belleville NIOT (Not in our Town) Group – to prevent violence and hate in their communities.



Southwest Illinois College Belleville AmeriCorps members pose with community members to show their support for building a beloved community.

This year, many programs across the state of Illinois honored Dr. King's vision through a project. Alternatives, Inc., located in Chicago, hosted a College and Career Fair for their Youth Center's high school students and their families.

The fair included a financial aid information session, meetings with admissions counselors, and a student panel comprised of current college students. According to Andrew Tonachel of Alternatives, Inc., the program members hoped to provide meaningful, individualized information and support to high school students and their parents in preparing for successful futures.

At the other end of the state, 40 Belleville AmeriCorps members organized and participated in two projects. In Belleville, members implemented a civic discussion and dialogue called "Building a Beloved Community." The event also included performances by a gospel choir, ethnic dance groups and activities for children and adults of all ages. In the afternoon, members sponsored a clothing give-away. In nearby Lebanon, members, students and families participated in "Kids Against Hunger," a service project that consisted of packing food for kids in Nicaragua.

This year, 369 AmeriCorps members and 1,373 volunteers contributed over 8,000 hours to MLK Day projects in their communities. The projects benefited more than 11,200 individuals throughout the state.



"The mission of the Serve Illinois Commission is to improve Illinois communities by supporting and enhancing traditional volunteerism and community service and the administration of the AmeriCorps program."

To be added to the mailing list, please e-mail DHS.ServeIllinois@Illinois.gov.

From the Executive Director



Welcome to the Spring 2011 issue of the Serve Illinois Newsletter.

I want to begin by congratulating the recipients of the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund grants – The Jane Addams Hull House, The Cara Program, Central States SER, Jane Addams Resource Corporation, Association House, Greater Southwest Development Corporation, North Lawndale Employment Network, Humboldt Park Social Services and Safer Foundation. These Chicago-based organizations were named as sub-grantees under Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and were selected based on their ability to demonstrate considerable community impact.

LISC, along with 10 other organizations, was awarded a Social Innovation Fund grant due to its successful record of recognizing and expanding high-performing nonprofit agencies. Each of the 11 grantees is currently working with their sub-grantees to create programs that will address urgent issues in the realm of economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development and school support. In particular, LISC was awarded \$4.2 million over one year to be used in 47 organizations located within nine cities across the nation, including Chicago. LISC will use the grant to grow Financial Opportunity Centers, which are part of LISC's comprehensive Building Sustainable Communities initiative to help low-income residents transform their disadvantaged neighborhoods into places of choice and opportunity. The Centers are created through local collaborations with community-based nonprofits and combine employment training/placement, financial literacy and public benefits support to help distressed families improve their quality of life and plan for the future.

The Financial Opportunity Center model (which began in Chicago) has proved its value by offering "bundled" services, a personalized assistance approach and using coaches (not case managers) to encourage participants to independently set goals and make wise financial decisions. The Centers serve over 7,500 individuals and results from one evaluation show that 56 percent of participants recorded gains in net income, 42 percent showed increases in credit scores and 43 percent increased their net worth. For additional information about the Illinois sub-grantees, see the "Happenings" section on the following page.

Again, congratulations to our Illinois recipients. I look forward to seeing their programs benefit and expand with the assistance of these funds.

Yours in Service,

Ted Gibbs
Serve Illinois Commission
Office of Governor Pat Quinn

From the Chair



For the commissioners of Serve Illinois, hope springs eternal. Your 35 commissioners recently met to strategically plan the next 12-18 months. This energetic, dedicated group worked diligently to further establish the committee work initiated by our past chair, Howard Lathan and vice chair Rosemary Keefe. Under Howard and Rosemary's leadership, the commission has flourished. The Governor's Volunteer Service Award was successfully initiated to highlight the inspiring volunteer efforts of Illinois residents of all ages. The commission celebrated Chicago's selection as a City of Service. A new governor was elected.

I am honored to have been elected to the chairperson role on the Serve Illinois Commission along with Andrew Barbeau, newly elected vice chair. The foundation has been set for us to continue to expand commission efforts to encourage, support and recognize the work of devoted volunteers across the state. It is my goal to work closely with all commissioners to develop a thorough understanding of the work, successes and challenges of volunteers. With this knowledge, the commission will strive to

expand awareness of volunteer efforts and develop an outreach campaign focused on sharing best practices. Be sure to Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ServeIllinois/ to receive timely commission updates.

With the recent snowstorm, I'm sure each of us witnessed friends, neighbors, or coworkers come together for a common cause – to clear the streets. According to Wikipedia, volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. Please join the commission as we celebrate you – the volunteers who create, manage and lead positive change throughout the year in Illinois. Hope springs eternal.

Yours in service,

Jill C. Heise

Illinois Programs Receive Social Innovation Fund Sub Grants

Nine Illinois programs were recently awarded grants by the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund intermediary, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The programs were selected competitively and will use the funds to develop Financial Opportunity Centers or improve existing centers, which will help move each organization towards its goal of creating sustainable communities. The centers will serve as a model for boosting earnings, reducing expenses and educating low-income families on how to make wise financial decisions. Illinois recipients are as follows:

The Jane Addams Hull House was awarded a \$180,000 grant. Hull House will launch a new Financial Opportunity Center at Kennedy King College and offer services to individuals in the Englewood, Washington Park and Woodlawn communities.

The Cara Program received a \$175,000 grant and will use the funds through their Quad Communities Center for Working Families (CWF), which places individuals afflicted with homelessness and poverty into full-time, quality jobs in the Chicago area.

Central States SER in Chicago was selected for a \$155,000 award. SER (which is Spanish for "to be") promotes economic self-sufficiency and helps low-skilled adults build valuable work experience. SER will develop a new Financial Opportunity Center in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago.

Jane Addams Resource Corporation received a grant for \$155,000. The organization will use the funds to increase the number of clients receiving employment, financial and income support services each year, as well as the number of those who received bundled services.

Association House was awarded \$150,000 and plans to expand its Financial Opportunity Center services and ensure that two additional programs receive full financial and career center coaching services.

Greater Southwest Development Corporation was awarded a \$140,000 grant. The grant will be used to create a new service delivery strategy and increase the number of clients served in the organization's Southwest REACH Center.

North Lawndale Employment Network received \$140,000 and plans to expand the services and grow the clientele in their existing Financial Opportunity Center.

Humboldt Park Social Services was selected for a \$140,000 award. The organizations will use the grant to increase staffing so more clients can be effectively served and tracked.

Safer Foundation received \$125,000 and will establish a new Financial Opportunity Center to help individuals with criminal records achieve economic stability in high re-entry neighborhoods of Chicago.



Commission on Volunteerism
and Community Service

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you should know

National Volunteer Week & AmeriCorps Week

National Volunteer Week (April 10-16) is about motivating, recognizing and supporting individuals to develop unique means of engaging their community members in volunteer service. Through service, communities can work together to accomplish nationwide goals and promote positive social change. National Volunteer Week is the perfect opportunity for organizations and volunteers to be recognized and thanked for their service.



A free National Volunteer Resource Guide toolkit is available for download at the Hands On Network web site. The toolkit includes suggestions for projects and ideas organizations can utilize to recognize, encourage and inspire their volunteers during National Volunteer Week.

Organizations can also recognize their outstanding volunteers on a national level. For the past 20 years, Points of Light Institute has promoted volunteerism and highlighted exceptional volunteers through programs such as The President's Volunteer Service Award, Daily of Light Award and the Extra Mile-Points of Light Volunteer Pathway. To learn more about these recognition programs, nominate a volunteer for an award or download a toolkit, visit www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/signatureevents/nvw.

The fifth annual AmeriCorps Week, a recruitment and recognition event intended to engage more citizens in service and commend past and present volunteers for their efforts, will be celebrated May 7-14. The week gives AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners and friends a chance to highlight the service they and others have done for America. Since the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act set a goal to increase AmeriCorps members from 85,000 to 250,000 in 2017, it is now particularly important to promote AmeriCorps across the nation.

AmeriCorps Week can be celebrated in numerous ways. Members can plan and implement a community event, speak to a local school or organization, or even engage local officials in a community activity or event. It is most important to simply spread the word about AmeriCorps and its mission through the celebration. For ideas of ways to impact your community during AmeriCorps week and to download free resources, visit americorpsweek.gov.



CONTACT US!

The Serve Illinois Commission is interested in learning what you and your organization did for the AmeriCorps Week. To share your story (and any event photos,) please e-mail dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. Your organization may be featured in the next newsletter!

update

LeaderCorps Members Prepare for 2011

After only 3 months of being part of the council, LeaderCorps members collaborated with each other and their fellow members' organizations to carry out service projects for MLK Day of Service on January 17. Collaboration efforts were organized by the National Days of Service Committee, which was formed at LeaderCorps' first meeting.



Members of the Alumni Committee discuss multiple approaches to connect with past AmeriCorps members. If you are an AmeriCorps alum, see page 7 for information about connecting with LeaderCorps.

LeaderCorps members convened in Springfield on November 30 and December 1 for their first meeting since being selected as representatives. R. Dale Evans, Social Services Coordinator for the Housing Authority in Joliet, led the group in icebreakers and team building activities on the first day. Scott McFarland, Resources and Information Manager for the Serve Illinois Commission, also provided an overview of the commission and volunteerism. The first day concluded with nominations and elections of leadership roles within the group.

The following members were selected for their positions by their peers:

- Braden Latham-Jones (Schuler Scholars Program) – President
- Ashley Mauter (Project YES!) – Vice President
- Sam Copeland (Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center) – Secretary
- Dan Ready (City Year Chicago) – National Days of Service Coordinator
- Aaron Tebrinkle (Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs AmeriCorps*VISTA) – Marketing and Outreach Committee Chair
- Christine Ruby (Volunteer Outreach for Community Action in Literacy [VOCAL]) – Alumni Committee Chair
- Madelyne Greene (Parent Child Center [PCC] AmeriCorps) – National Days of Service Committee Chair

All other members joined one of three committees: the Alumni Committee, National Days of Service Committee, or the Marketing and Outreach Committee. LeaderCorps group also developed plans to be used as the foundation for Days of Service that will occur within the next few months. Particular areas of focus were Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and AmeriCorps Week.

The LeaderCorps Ledger, a newsletter created by the LeaderCorps Marketing and Outreach Committee, will be released at the end of February and be available on the Serve Illinois web site. LeaderCorps will continue to work throughout 2011 to support service in their communities. Their next major events will come during AmeriCorps Week (May 7-14, 2011). For more information on LeaderCorps' goals and projects, please contact Serve Illinois at dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov.

spotlight

Put NCCC to Work for You

AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a full-time, team-based, national service program administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. NCCC members, 18 to 24-years-old from all across the country, serve in teams of 10 to 12 members at one of our five locations. These locations are Denver, Colorado; Perry Point, Maryland; Sacramento, California; Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Vinton, Iowa. Each location is responsible for a region of states in which NCCC teams serve on projects six to eight weeks in length. The North Central Region campus, which opened in 2008 in Vinton is responsible for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

NCCC teams work on service projects in the areas of disaster relief, energy conservation, urban and rural development, infrastructure improvement and the environment. In 2009, a NCCC team from Iowa served with the Shawnee National Forest from March 5 to April 21 in Vienna, Illinois. The team lived in the backcountry of Shawnee National Forest and worked on trail construction, creek crossings and installation of stairs at a creek crossing. The trail systems at Shawnee National Forest have been user-made, which causes erosion and other environmental concerns with the preservation of the land. Therefore, the park is in the process of redesigning the trail system.

Do you have projects that you have been trying to complete for a long time or a special project that you could use assistance completing? Could the energy of a team of young adults help you complete them? Consider applying for an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team. NCCC is currently looking for community service projects for our upcoming class, which begins in February 2011. Those eligible to apply are nonprofit organizations, government entities (federal, state or local), educational institutions, community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, Native American Tribal Councils and Faith-Based organizations.

For more information on how you can become an AmeriCorps NCCC project sponsor, please contact JJ Trotta at jtrotta@cns.gov or 319.472.9654.

Contributed by Angela Sarrels, Community Relations Specialist, AmeriCorps NCCC-North Central Region.

Visit Illinois' Newest Volunteer Center without Leaving Your Home



Illinois' newest volunteer center, the Southwestern Illinois Volunteer Center, is not your average agency. Creating the center cost far less than other centers that have been implemented in the past. Additionally, volunteers from across the entire southwestern region can access the center in a matter of seconds (without even starting their cars!). The most notable difference, however, is that the volunteer center has no physical location. It is located entirely online.

According to Shannon Lucas, an AmeriCorps VISTA serving as the Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator at the center, maintaining a virtual center was the most feasible choice for a variety of reasons. Purchasing online software was far less expensive than renting or purchasing an office location. The center also covers such a vast region in southwestern Illinois, that a physical location may not have been conveniently accessible for many potential volunteers. An online headquarters, however, allows individuals to access the center from the comfort of their own homes at any time of the day. The virtual volunteer center launched in March 2010.

On the web site, individuals can create a volunteer profile (so they can be notified of volunteer opportunities in the region,) browse current volunteer listings and organizations can post volunteer opportunities. Since its implementation last March, 135 organizations have listed volunteer activities and 40 individuals have created a volunteer profile.

As the administrator of the web site, Lucas can access all 135 of the volunteer center's organizations in a matter of seconds. She said this ability is the biggest benefit to operating a virtual center. Although the volunteer center has grown tremendously since it was launched, Lucas identified several more goals. The volunteer center would like to have 100 volunteer profiles created by March 2011. Lucas said the volunteer center would like to have at least 10 organizations from each county in their region listed on the web site. She encouraged the region's smaller counties to visit the web site and list more of their nonprofit organizations.

The online volunteer center has received a lot of positive feedback. Individuals appreciate how easy the web site is to navigate and potential volunteers appreciate having various organizations listed in one place. If you would like to create a volunteer profile or list your organization, visit the Southwestern Illinois Volunteer Center at www.swivc.org.

Peace Corps Fellows Impact Rural Illinois Communities

The Peace Corps Fellows Program at Western Illinois University is a unit of the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs, and supports the personal and professional development of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. The program offers high quality students who have served at least two years overseas in the Peace Corps opportunities to earn a Master's Degree with a specialization in community development. As part of their degree plan, the Peace Corps Fellows engage in an assistantship during their first year



of graduate school and an 11-month internship in a rural Illinois community during their second year.



Peace Corps fellows Kathryn Nees and Emily Schoenfelder pose for a photo in their AmeriCorps gear.

Through their internship, Peace Corps Fellows gain experience in project development and offer exceptional leadership to rural Illinois communities in the areas of community and economic development.

The program is currently comprised of seven full-time members and six half-time members. Emily Schoenfelder, a Peace Corps Fellow with the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development in Canton, works full time and attends school part-time. She said that it can be tough to manage both school and classes, but it is important to prioritize and she has learned to manage her time effectively. Through her internship, Schoenfelder is organizing volunteer groups in Fulton County, exploring



Kathryn Nees and Judy Torres discuss donor paperwork while volunteering at a Blood Drive.

the feasibility of creating a countywide grocery cooperative, and developing the framework for a self-guided historical tour of Canton. Last year, she worked as an Environmental Education Coordinator at Horn Field Campus, a recreation facility run by Western Illinois University. At the Horn Field Campus, Schoenfelder helped start a community garden

for low-income families and taught groups about the ecosystem and local environment. After finishing her Peace Corps service in South Africa, she became a Peace Corps Fellow in August 2009 and will complete the program at the end of July.

Dustin Hinrichs, a Peace Corps Fellow working full-time as a Field Coordinator with the nonprofit organization, "Trees Forever," also joined the program in August 2009. Hinrichs is currently coordinating a project that will educate 24 small, under-served communities about the Emerald Ash Borer beetle,

which is an invasive pest that can harm community trees. Hinrichs was attracted to the Peace Corps Fellows program due to its geographic location, the strong Public Administration program at the University, and the program's track record of having a powerful impact throughout Illinois. Hinrichs spent his first year of the Peace Corps Fellows program working for the City of Macomb Building and Zoning office. He performed projects related to the 2010 Census, historical building preservation and zoning and planning activities.

"I like the diversity of opportunities afforded to AmeriCorps members serving in this program," said Hinrichs. "Given the background of most returned Peace Corps volunteers, we all have very different interests in the program and study different subject matter but we can collaborate on projects to be more effective as we work in rural Illinois."

Although the communities they serve are positively impacted by their service, the Peace Corps Fellows are also benefited. Schoenfelder said her favorite memories involve the amazing people with whom she has worked, and she has learned a lot about nonprofit organizations and the way communities must work together to accomplish goals. Hinrichs has also gained knowledge from his experience. Primarily, the program has enhanced his patience and understanding, but working with small community governments has also been an eye-opening experience since his previous experience has been with large cities and counties. While Schoenfelder is open to employment opportunities after the Peace Corps Fellows program, Hinrichs plans to take his knowledge and experience to the public sector and work in local government or as a manager/supervisor in a nonprofit agency.

Since its creation, the Fellows Program has placed interns in over 60 rural Illinois communities and has received several awards for the excellence of their service. The program was recently awarded the Excellence in Community Development Award from the University Economic Development Association and was recognized as one of the 52 Most Innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the United States.

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a Volunteer
Opportunity
Today!

Visit Serve.Illinois.gov



In addition to the searchable portal of more than 71,000 volunteer opportunities statewide, Serve.Illinois.gov hosts a wide variety of volunteer resources:

- Ability to Post Volunteer Opportunities
- Statewide Volunteer Management Network Conference & Meeting Information
- National Service Program Information (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps & Learn and Serve America)
- Volunteerism Research & Volunteerism Web Links
- Featured Volunteer Stories
- Serve Illinois Calendar of Events

We want to hear from you!

If your agency is currently preparing for upcoming volunteerism or national service events, or if you have recently completed an event and would like to share your story, we want to hear from you. For newsletter or website publication consideration, please send information to dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. Web links, photos accompanying a story and professional development resources are also encouraged.

Save the Date

2011 Volunteerism Conferences

East Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference

June 16, 2011– Parkland College, Champaign, IL



Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration

July, 2011; location TBA

ICOVA



Northwestern Illinois Volunteerism Conference

Fall, 2011; location TBA



Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference

September 29, 2011– Mt. Vernon, IL



West Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference

October 27, 2011– Macomb, IL

More information will be available at www.serve.illinois.gov

Serve Illinois Welcomes Elizabeth Solomon

The Serve Illinois Commission is happy to announce the addition of a new AmeriCorps Program Officer, Elizabeth Solomon, to the Commission staff. Prior



to beginning her position with the Commission on February 1, Solomon was employed within the Division of Capital Development in Springfield. She has worked in various agencies within the state government for 12 years. Solomon graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting in 1997. She lives in Springfield and is the mother of two (her daughter is attending Lincoln Land Community College and her son is a student at Southeast High School).

Attention AmeriCorps Alumni!

The 2011 Leader Corps Alumni Committee is seeking alumni contact information and we need your help! If you served in an Illinois AmeriCorps program between the years of 2008-2010, please send your updated contact information to dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov at your earliest convenience.

Please include your name, mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number, along with the name of the AmeriCorps Program(s) you served in and what year(s) you were a member. We will use this information to request alumni feedback and suggestions to keep YOU active and engaged in a life of service.

Thank you!





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“Building Stronger Communities Through Service”

Upcoming Days of Service

April 10-16, 2011	National Volunteer Week www.handsonnetwork.org
April 15-17, 2011	Global Youth Service Day www.ysa.org/gysd
May 7, 2011	Join Hands Day http://joinhandsday.org/
May 7-14, 2011	AmeriCorps Week http://americorpsweek.gov/index.asp



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Illinois AmeriCorps Disability Outreach Project: Meeting the needs for AmeriCorps Members of all backgrounds and abilities.

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