



SERVE ILLINOIS

Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service

Spring 2012

Volunteers Honor Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through Service

While many individuals spent the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday relaxing from school or work, thousands of volunteers statewide engaged in service projects to honor the legacy and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Governor Pat Quinn joined the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Serve Illinois Commission in encouraging Illinois citizens to take part in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service that took place on Monday, January 16. The theme of the service day was "A Day On, Not a Day Off."

"Dr. King's life was dedicated to service, and, in his memory, we should each strive to give back to our communities," Governor Quinn stated. "We all have something to contribute and share to make our neighborhoods, state and country a better place."

Numerous nonprofit organizations and AmeriCorps programs took part in the Day of Service. Chicago Cares celebrated Dr. King's dream of unity and service by engaging more than 250 volunteer leaders and over 3,000 volunteers in more than 40 projects throughout the day. The event took place at Union Station and projects included creating educational wall murals to inspire learning and healthy choices, painting classrooms and common areas in local schools to improve the learning atmosphere, as well as leading seniors and students through various other projects while offering companionship and mentoring.



Governor Quinn addresses volunteers at the Chicago Cares celebration at Union Station in Chicago.

Many AmeriCorps programs throughout Illinois also engaged their members in the Day of Service. The Land of Lincoln AmeriCorps of Rend Lake College participated in a city-wide clean-up of Carbondale, and the Springfield Urban League educated youth at a local boys and girls club about different types of bullying and how to handle bullying. The Springfield Urban League also partnered with the Illinois Capital Area

Chapter of the American Red Cross to distribute 4,500 flyers about fire safety and prevention to the Springfield community. Meanwhile, Asian Human Services of Chicago offered workshops for their Literacy Education for Adults and Families (LEAF) program clients and their families. The workshops focused on arts, crafts, food decorating, literacy games and discussion activities that were used to promote a sense of shared community among the program's diverse clients. Throughout the state, 915 volunteers joined 800 AmeriCorps members to benefit 13,900 Illinois citizens.



Volunteers prepare to begin their service projects at the Chicago Cares celebration of service.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service is an event that encourages all volunteers, as well as the individuals they serve, to remember the importance of diversity, teamwork and shared community. "Volunteerism is a great way to honor Dr. King, his legacy and his vision," said DHS Secretary Michelle R. B. Saddler. "I am proud and grateful to our community volunteers in our local DHS offices 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 email DHS.ServeIllinois@Illinois.gov.

From the Executive Director



The start of a new year brings new and exciting opportunities for Illinoisans to address critical issues in their communities through service and volunteerism. According to the website www.USA.gov, the three most common resolutions for Americans to make relate to changes in fitness, career or education goals and volunteering. To help you on your goal toward increased volunteerism, visit www.serve.gov or our website, www.serve.illinois.gov. Through these websites, you can search volunteer opportunities that will help you engage in the betterment of your community. AmeriCorps and Peace Corps are two of the volunteer programs listed on these sites; each of these programs focus on improving communities domestically and internationally.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Illinois ranks fourth among states for members of the Peace Corps, with 397 members. Peace Corps members interested in continuing their service domestically while completing a master's degree may wish to pursue the Peace Corps Fellows Program at Western Illinois University, which is one of the corporation's funded AmeriCorps programs – you may read about one of our Peace Corps and Peace Corps Fellows alumni on the following pages.

In addition, please make plans to join us at the 2012 National Conference on Volunteering and Service, convened by Points of Light, which will be held in Chicago from June 18-20. The conference has become the largest and most impactful event for the service sector, bringing together more than 5,000 leaders, including nonprofit organizations, corporations, social entrepreneurs, educators, faith organizations and others committed to creating change.

Make your resolution today – commit yourself to a year of service, whether it is in your own community or one abroad. Registration is now open at www.volunteeringandservice.org.

Sincerely,

Ted Gibbs

From the Chair



Spring is upon us and there is no better time to partake in service to your community. As the trees and flowers begin to blossom, let the same be true of your service. The possibilities for volunteerism are endless, and options abound for all age groups, from young children to senior citizens. In this edition of the newsletter, I would like to make readers aware of an innovative approach to volunteerism. Skills-Based Volunteering (SBV) specializes the volunteer efforts within nonprofit organizations by using the skills, talents, experience and education of volunteers and matching them with the needs of the organization.

Each particular age group in an organization may use its talents or professional skills to best contribute to the nonprofit networks in which they work. For instance, Generation Y volunteers may be particularly adept at social media marketing or using new technology to advance volunteer efforts, while baby boomers may be able to incorporate skills learned from their careers into the volunteer sector. By linking volunteers to appropriate projects that will maximize their skills and talents most effectively, volunteers are able to make a larger impact and build a stronger relationship with the nonprofit organization.

Many nonprofit organizations, such as the Points of Light Institute, Taproot Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service, believe strongly in the SBV philosophy. To learn more about Skills-Based Volunteering and how to incorporate it in your organization, visit www.nationalserviceresources.org/sbv.

Thank you for supporting volunteer and community service. I encourage you to develop and nurture the endless possibilities to be involved.

Sincerely,

Jill C. Heise

AmeriCorps Member Recognized for Excellence in Academics & Service

Anthony Graham, Land of Lincoln AmeriCorps member and student at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, was recently named a Student Laureate of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois. Each year, the Lincoln Academy honors senior students at each of the four-year, degree-granting institutions in Illinois for overall excellence in curricula and extra-curricular programs. The Lincoln Academy of Illinois is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization governed by a Board of Regents and a membership of General Trustees; the Governor of Illinois is the President of the Academy.

Graham, a senior studying socio-cultural anthropology and sociology, tutors and mentors fourth and fifth grade students in Carbondale through his AmeriCorps program. Graham said his service experience has been “amazing” and has helped him develop a passion for youth development.

Graham represented his university and the state of Illinois at a convocation held at the Old State Capitol in Springfield on November 5, 2011. Graham and the other student laureates toured the Capitol and then attended a ceremony where they were presented with a Student Laureate medallion, a certificate of achievement and a \$500 monetary grant. The event ended with lunch at the Governor’s Mansion.

“I was in awe,” Graham said, of being selected for the prestigious award. “I’m proud to have been selected to represent SIUC’s College of Liberal Arts. The college has been amazing to me and instrumental in my success as a student.”

During his time at SIUC, Graham has completed more than 1,000 hours of volunteer work; these hours are in addition to the service completed as a student at his previous school, Rend Lake College. Graham will graduate with his bachelor’s degree this spring and plans to continue with service. Following graduation, he will pursue a master’s degree in social work and enroll in an international program that will allow him to end the program with Peace Corps service.

To recommend one of your outstanding AmeriCorps members for a Member Spotlight piece, please email the member’s accomplishments and contact information to dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. We look forward to hearing about your member’s achievements and impact on Illinois communities.



Serve.Illinois.gov

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you should know

Target Executive Laysha Ward Elected Board Chair of Corporation for National and Community Service

The board of directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has elected Target Corporation executive, and longtime service champion, Laysha L. Ward to serve as chair. Ward is president



Laysha Ward addresses volunteers at a MLK Day of Service event in 2010.

of Community Relations for Target. She oversees the corporation's domestic and international grant making, community sponsorships, cause marketing initiatives, volunteerism and other civic activities. She is also responsible for the Target Foundation.

"The Corporation for National and Community Service, as well as the organizations and volunteers it supports, are making an important investment in our nation's future by solving local problems, supporting

vulnerable citizens and strengthening communities throughout the United States," said Ward. "Throughout my life, I've seen how volunteers can make a powerful impact, and I am honored and excited to take on this role at a time of growing need and momentum for service in America."

"Laysha is a national leader who brings decades of experience and a passionate commitment to service, and we are fortunate to have her as chair as we increase the impact of service on tough challenges facing our nation," said Robert Velasco, II, Acting CEO of CNCS.

Ward began her career with Target Corporation in 1991. She serves on the board of the Denny's Corporation and the Executive Leadership Council, a national membership organization for African American executives. She is also a member of the Aspen Institute's Commission on No Child Left Behind, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and The Links, an international woman's service organization.

update

LeaderCorps Members Share Impact of MLK Day Activities

The 2011-2012 LeaderCorps members have been meeting to discuss and plan projects for upcoming days of service. The most recent project completed was the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service on January 16.

Sarah Paulson, of the Volunteer Outreach for Community Action in Literacy (VOCAL) program, said AmeriCorps members in her organization completed several projects that impacted over 100 individuals. AmeriCorps members conducted a three-hour workshop combining arts and crafts with lessons on diversity, peace and dreams for children in the Mercy Housing family units; a similar workshop for children staying at the Children's Memorial Hospital was also hosted. Other members prepared and served food at a community shelter while helping with various tasks such as folding donated clothing and taking an inventory of items in the shelter's pantry.

Through a partnership of nearly 35 organizations, Ali Ardery, of City Year-Chicago, said her AmeriCorps program painted two hallways, 50 classrooms, 72 murals, 79 inspirational quotes, 19 panel murals and completed 44 construction projects at two schools and one YMCA. The project will touch over 2,000 individuals in the Chicago area.

According to Ahmar Ursani, the Belleville AmeriCorps partnered with several organizations to engage in small group discussions, implement a pen pal program between senior citizens and elementary school students, sewed tote bags and packed them with school supplies to give to students, and offered money management and coupon utilization classes for individuals. Approximately 100 citizens benefited from these projects.

To read more about each AmeriCorps program's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day activities, visit www.serve.illinois.gov. Since the completion of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, LeaderCorps members have been focusing on plans for AmeriCorps Week, which is March 10-18. Look for more information on these achievements in the upcoming newsletter.

AmeriCorps Members: Where Are They Now?

Former Peace Corps Fellow **Kyle Turk**

Kyle Turk began his Peace Corps quest in 2004 when he left a career in computer sciences to serve with the Peace Corps in Mexico for two years. This service gave him a taste of community development and influenced his decision to pursue the Peace Corps Fellows Program at Western Illinois University upon the conclusion of his service in Mexico.

As a Peace Corps Fellow, Turk was able to pursue his MBA, receive a community development post-baccalaureate certificate, partake in professional developers certification trainings and work as an AmeriCorps member, both during and for a year following his studies. Turk's AmeriCorps service with a pork processing plant in Beardstown helped increase the access to products and services for a growing Mexican immigrant community within the area. By forming partnerships with the local banks, clinics, schools, municipality and other organizations, Turk expanded these services to all individuals, regardless of citizenship status or language spoken. He particularly enjoyed this experience because it allowed him to give back to the people who gave him so much while serving in Mexico with the Peace Corps.



Turk's service in Cass County influenced him to return to the Peace Corps. He is currently serving in Botswana and working with HIV support groups, women's empowerment groups in the cultural arts and leading income-generation projects with indigenous groups. Turk said he was drawn back to the Peace Corps because he could work with people before they reach a tipping-point decision to leave their country.

To learn more about the Peace Corps Fellows program at Western Illinois University, please visit www.peacecorpsfellows-wiu.org/.

To recommend one of your former or current AmeriCorps members for a member spotlight, please email your member's story to dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. We look forward to hearing the achievements of our members and alumni!

Little City and Office Max Open Doors for Employees with Disabilities

Today, autism affects one out of every 100 children throughout the nation. It is the fastest growing developmental disability at an astounding 1,148 percent growth rate.

Thankfully, for more than 50 years, Little City Foundation has successfully created hope, changed lives and challenged the limits placed on children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Little City recently hosted a three-day conference for more than 90 volunteers from OfficeMax® Incorporated on Little City's therapeutic, 56-acre campus in Palatine. Volunteers included operations directors, corporate engineers and supply chain managers from various OfficeMax stores around the U.S. Volunteers worked on various projects around the campus such as sorting books for Little City's Annual Book Fair, playing basketball with Little City athletes and socially interacting with adults on campus. Volunteers also learned more about Little City's Center for Employment Services and how they can employ individuals with disabilities.

"Customers with disabilities and their families, friends and associates represent a trillion dollar market segment," commented Little City Executive Director Shawn E. Jeffers. "Hiring employees with disabilities increases a company's financial bottom line, increases retention, delivers a greater ROI, provides tax breaks and more importantly, brings satisfaction of one's social civic duty...it's not just the right thing to do, it's a smart thing to do."

More than 250 full and part-time workers are supported through Little City's Center for Employment Services. The program provides individuals with the needed support to engage in paid work opportunities. Little City solicits subcontract work in the areas of assembly, packaging, collating, shredding and inspection in order to offer work-skill development. It also offers a variety of educational and experiential activities, based on the preferred choices of the participants.

Little City stands fully committed to equal employment opportunities and commends partners like OfficeMax. For more information on how to hire individuals with disabilities, visit www.littlecity.org/hire. To find out how you or your company can volunteer, visit www.littlecity.org/volunteer.

- Submitted by Sally Blake, Communications Associate, Little City Foundation



Many Names, One Mission:

Land of Lincoln/Southern 7 AmeriCorps Addresses Needs in Southern Illinois

The Land of Lincoln/Southern 7 AmeriCorps program has operated under several different names since the program's creation in 1995. During that time, five community colleges and one university in southern Illinois formed partnerships with local school districts to meet various schools' expressed needs for help with middle school students who were falling



A young student at Ina Grade School receives help on his homework from AmeriCorps member Dorothy Cocks.

behind in their studies due to disciplinary problems. Some of these students were joining gangs and as they got older, were dropping out of school, which was increasing the number of young, unemployed citizens in rural, southern Illinois communities. AmeriCorps in Southern Illinois (ASI) stepped in to provide extra tutors to help fill the gap. Partnering colleges for the effort were Shawnee Community College, Southeastern Illinois College, John A. Logan College, Rend Lake College, Kaskaskia College and Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

In 2000, ASI expanded northward and added literacy tutoring in grades K-2 to address the basic reading skills many students lacked throughout their grade school years. The Land of Lincoln AmeriCorps (LLA) was created out of ASI to reach into additional college districts farther north. A year later in 2001, LLA was asked to expand again to add the southern seven counties of Illinois.



AmeriCorps member Stacey Chobanian tutors and mentors a student in reading and writing at Ina Grade School.

Thus, the Southern 7 AmeriCorps program was born. However, due to state and federal budget cuts, the program's territory was drastically reduced in 2003. After these cuts, the program focused mainly in the southern portion of the state, which prompted the program to adapt the name Land of Lincoln/Southern 7 AmeriCorps.

Today, the program's AmeriCorps members still tutor and mentor in approximately 30 local grade schools. Additionally, members assist in computer literacy labs, battered women's centers, and with environmental education in approximately 12 additional faith-based and nonprofit agency sites in the southern-most counties of Illinois. Since 1995, more than 1,000 AmeriCorps members have been part of the Land of Lincoln/Southern 7 AmeriCorps; many of the members were full-time college students who went on to complete their degrees. Several former members even returned to the area and have been hired as teachers, principals or superintendents in local school districts after graduation. Over 6,500 grade school students have been tutored throughout the duration of the program. Some students, formerly tutored by AmeriCorps members, have gone on to join AmeriCorps and tutor other deserving students like themselves.

One of this year's members, Jenna Pelaez, describes her service as, "My service site was Field Grade School. I was there on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and attended my own classes all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I'm always in the third grade classroom. There were thirty kids in that class, so it got pretty stressful at times. Overall, it's a really great experience. I love kids, so I really enjoyed being around them a few days each week. I always tried to encourage them and build them up."



Jodie Delaney and Casey Bryan, AmeriCorps members at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, help rescue an injured short-eared owl found on the refuge. The owl was taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center for recovery.

Another member, Cassie Hollenkamp, says, "I served at Woodlawn Grade School and worked with the Kindergarten classroom. It has been a wonderful experience. I enjoy working with the children, and do my best to encourage them and exemplify being a leader to them."

The AmeriCorps members strive to have a positive impact on the students whom they tutor, and their efforts appear to be successful. Some comments made by students in regard to their AmeriCorps tutors are as follows: "He makes the work understanding", "He Rocks", and "She makes me want to try harder."

For further information about Land of Lincoln/Southern 7 AmeriCorps, call 618.437.5321, ext. 1351 or 1345.

Find or Post
a Volunteer
Opportunity
Today!

Visit Serve.Illinois.gov



In addition to the searchable portal of more than 140,000 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.

Training and Professional Development

Save the Date

2012 Volunteerism Conferences

East Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
June 7, 2012 – Mattoon, IL



Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration:
August 9, 2012 – Chicago, IL

West Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
October 25, 2012 – Macomb, IL



Northwest Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
Fall 2012 – Dixon, IL

Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
Fall 2012 – Mt. Vernon, IL



Mark Your Calendars

For the 2012 National Conference on Volunteering and Service

The National Conference will be held June 18-20, 2012 in McCormick Place West at Lake Michigan. If you or your organization works with volunteers in any way, this is an event you will not want to miss! Since this year's conference is hosted by our own home state, now is your chance to learn, network and be inspired through a wide variety of exciting and enlightening sessions, workshops, special events, service projects, exhibits, specialized corporate tracks and more. In the past, the conference has appealed to volunteer coordinators and supervisors, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Foster Grandparents, nonprofit professionals and many other individuals passionate about volunteerism.



Volunteers are also needed for the conference. Four-hour shifts for projects such as stuffing conference bags, evaluating workshops, assisting with registration, etc. are available.

For more information about the conference, volunteering and to register for the conference, visit <http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/>.



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Upcoming Days of Service

March 10-18, 2012	AmeriCorps Week http://www.americorps.gov
April 15-21, 2012	National Volunteer Week www.handsonnetwork.org
April 20-22, 2012	Global Youth Service Day www.ysa.org/gysd
May 5, 2012	Join Hands Day http://www.fraternalalliance.org
June 18-20, 2012	National Conference on Volunteering and Service http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/



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

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