Working Together to Strengthen Illinois Communities

2013 ANNUAL REPORT
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Strengthening the Infrastructure of Service

When you hear the word “infrastructure,” you generally think about bridges, buildings, railroad tracks and highways. Infrastructure represents the building blocks of a connected society and the foundation of communities. Just as first-rate physical infrastructure is critical to commerce, health and safety, the infrastructure that supports community service is arguably just as critical to society’s progress and success.

The latest research on volunteerism, conducted annually by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service, points to great efforts in Illinois. Over 2.73 million volunteered in 2012. The more than 280 million hours devoted to strengthening your communities through volunteerism was valued at $6.3 BILLION for the year! Whether through formal service programs like AmeriCorps or Senior Corps, or via traditional volunteerism to support faith-based efforts, sports programming, food pantries, or countless other community causes, service equals strength.

But just as physical infrastructure constantly requires restoration, it is important to remember that our volunteer ecosystem must constantly be cultivated and reinforced. This is why the Serve Illinois Commission and its partners in the Generations Serving Generations network are taking strategic steps to continually assess and invest in community and statewide partnerships to further this spirit. Service equals strength—if we stay focused on this, and we remind ourselves that the 2.73 million Illinoisans who volunteer only represent 27% of our residents, substantially increasing that percentage not only will drive up that $6.3 billion value of volunteerism, but just think about the implications for community resilience in our great state! Service built our country; let’s make sure that in Illinois we do our part to make sure it’s a continued source of our strength.

Fredrick D. Nettles
Serve Illinois Commission
Chair

Brandon T. Bodor
Serve Illinois Commission
Executive Director
Serve Illinois Commission Members

The Commission is appointed by the governor and consists of 25 bipartisan voting members and 15 bipartisan nonvoting members. Commission members are diverse in areas of expertise, race, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, and geographic location. At least 25% of the members must be from the City of Chicago and no more than 50% of the commission may be from the same political party. Voting members serve 1 to 3 year terms, and nonvoting members serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Members are:

Frederick D. Nettles, Chair
Don Baden, Vice Chair
Jane Angelis
Kathleen Blair
Julian Brown
Barb Byrne
Bechara Choucair
Merri Dee
Evelyn J. Diaz
James Dixon
Robert Dwyer
Kathy Engelken
Alvin Goldfarb
Amanda Guinn
Jill Heise
John Hosteny
Nancy K. Jameson
Christopher A. Koch
Howard L. Lathan

Debra Marton
Bob McCammon
Garry McCarthy
Jenné Myers
Hannah Porter
Toni Preckwinkle
Robert “Al” Riddley
Joseph Rives
Giraldo Rosales
Anne Schuman
Cynthia Sims
Ilya Sheyman
Stephen Silberman
Lonnette Stonitsch
Barbara Tubekis
Jeff Turnbull
Heather Way
Jennifer Witzel

Serve Illinois Commission Staff

Brandon Bodor, Executive Director
Scott McFarland, Deputy Director
Lisa Akers, AmeriCorps Program Officer
Sue Zellers, AmeriCorps Program Officer
Karla Kunzeman, Volunteer Programs Manager
Mike Stehlin, Training Officer
Lois Barnhart, Inclusion Officer
Lanie Cooper, Graduate Public Service Intern
Courtney Abbott, Graduate Public Service Intern
Adam Weiner, Dunn Fellow, Local Government Liaison
Lillian Webb, New Sector AmeriCorps member
Cynthia Sandoval, Policy Dunn Fellow
The Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service Act (PA91-798, 20 ILCS 710) enabled the creation of a Commission to promote community service and volunteer participation as a way to foster community and state problem-solving; to encourage and support voluntary citizen involvement in government and private programs throughout Illinois; to establish a long-term, thorough vision and plan of action for national volunteerism and community service efforts in the state; and to serve as the liaison between Illinois and national or state organizations that support its mission.

Mission

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.

Vision

The Serve Illinois Commission envisions an Illinois where all citizens recognize their ability and responsibility to help strengthen their communities through voluntary service. The Commission strives to create expanded and meaningful volunteerism throughout rural, suburban, and urban Illinois involving people of all backgrounds, cultures, and ages. The Commission envisions volunteers making measurable differences in their communities because they are well trained, supported, and on the cutting edge of problem solving.

Purpose

“The purpose of the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service is 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 Human Services for community service agencies, volunteers, and programs which utilize State and private volunteers.” — 20 ILCS 710, Chapter 1278, paragraphs 3800 to 3806.
Duties

The Commission meets quarterly with the Commission staff to discuss all issues relating to community service in the state. Working in cooperation with State agencies, individuals, local groups, and various other Illinois organizations, the duties of the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service are as follows:

- Prepare a 3-year state service plan in an open, public process, and update it annually
- Fund and administer AmeriCorps*State programs
- Promote National Days of Service (i.e. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, AmeriCorps Week, 9/11 Day of Service)
- Coordinate training, projects, and other activities related to service
- Recognize outstanding community service accomplishments
- Support, expand and improve Illinois community service initiatives
- Prepare financial assistance applications

History

In 1979, the Commission was founded as the Illinois Office of Voluntary Participation. The office switched names and was housed in several different offices before finding its place in the Department of Human Services in 1998. After the implementation of the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service Act in 2000, the commission was aptly named the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. The office began using the “Serve Illinois” moniker in 2007. The Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service is currently housed within the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Community Services, at 815 East Monroe Street in Springfield, Illinois.

*Illinois benefits when citizens, organizations, and businesses work together and strengthen their communities through volunteering and community service.*
Overview

Over 2.73 million Illinois citizens are currently volunteering with national and local nonprofits, schools, religious organizations, and other groups in Illinois.

- 3,600 individuals are AmeriCorps members
- 17,000 citizens are Senior Corps members

Facts and Statistics

- In Illinois, 27.4% of citizens volunteer.
- Illinois’ “volunteer rate” ranks 27th among states. Although Illinois’ volunteer rate generally lags behind most other states in the Midwest, the state exceeds the national average each year.
- This year, the Corporation for National and Community Service gave more than $36,010,000 to support the national service initiatives in Illinois.
- The top volunteer locations in Illinois are religious organizations (36.5%) and educational organizations (26.6%).
- In the past year, Illinois citizens volunteered 286 million hours; which equals over $6.6 billion in impact.

Sources: Volunteering in America: http://www.volunteeringinAmerica.gov/IL; Corporation for National and Community Service: http://www.nationalservice.gov/
National Service Programs

The Serve Illinois Commission administers AmeriCorps*State programs and partners with other National Service programs that are overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

AmeriCorps

_VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America— Members focus on capacity building and seek to end illiteracy, improve health services, increase housing opportunities, or eliminate poverty through their services. Individuals perform little or no direct service.

National Civilian Community Corps— NCCC is a residential service program that deploys teams of members to locations across the nation to instigate service projects with an emphasis on protecting the environment, promoting public safety, and responding to natural disasters.

_National Direct Programs—Members perform direct service for organizations that operate in multiple states.

_AmeriCorps*State Programs—Members perform direct service for organizations operating only in Illinois.

Senior Corps Programs

_RSVP—Retired & Senior Volunteer Program– This program utilizes the talents and time of individuals age 55 and over to serve communities in a variety of capacities.

_FGP—Foster Grandparents Program– Participants in this program work directly with low income children.

_SCP—Senior Companions Program– Individuals work with other seniors to help them maintain their independence.
AmeriCorps*State

Over 1,200 AmeriCorps*State members perform direct service for communities in Illinois. Through their service, AmeriCorps*State members strengthen communities and build relationships with the organizations and people they serve. Their service includes, but is not limited to, tutoring and mentoring, family literacy, community outreach, restoring parks, recruiting volunteers, safety education, and prenatal care.

AmeriCorps members commit to full or part-time service over a 9-12 month period. During their service, members may receive health coverage, training, and deferment of student loans. About half of all members also receive a modest living allowance. After successful completion of their service term, members receive an education award that can be applied toward existing student loans or used to pay the current cost of attending a higher education program.

Members join together in October of each year for National Service Recognition Day. More information about Recognition Day can be found on page 17.

AmeriCorps*State Grant Funding

AmeriCorps*State grant funding is distributed by the Serve Illinois Commission. These funds are given to local non-profit groups in the form of populated-based formula grants, and the remaining funds are awarded via a competitive grant process overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

In program year 2012-2013, the Serve Illinois Commission awarded nearly $4.5 million to formula grant programs and $3.1 million to competitive grant programs. A list of grantees can be viewed on the next page.
Illinois’ AmeriCorps Grantees (Headquarters)

Academy for Urban School Leadership (Chicago)
American Red Cross (Chicago)
Asian Human Services of Chicago, Inc. (Chicago)
Chicago Bar Foundation (Chicago)
Children’s Home Association of Illinois (Peoria)
City Year, Inc. (Chicago)
Greater Chicago Food Depository (Chicago)
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (Chicago)
Illinois Public Health Association (Springfield)
Jumpstart (Chicago)
Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House (East St. Louis)
Literacy Volunteers of America (Chicago)
Lutheran Social Services, Prisoner and Family Ministries (Marion)
McHenry County Mental Health Board (McHenry)
Northwestern University Settlement Association (Chicago)
PCC Community Wellness Center (Oak Park)
Public Allies, Inc. (Chicago)
Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (Chicago)
Rend Lake College (Ina)
Sauk Valley Community College (Dixon)
Schuler Family Foundation (Lake Forest)
Southwestern Illinois College (Belleville)
South Suburban Training and Rehabilitation Services (Chicago Heights)
Springfield Urban League (Springfield)
Teach for America (Chicago)
University of Illinois (Chicago)
Western Illinois University (Macomb)
West Suburban PADS (Oak Park)
Youth Organization Umbrella, Inc. (Evanston)
Each program determines where its Members can best carry out their service to their target communities. Some programs operate at a single site or in a single city or county. Other programs operate with several partner sites in multiple counties. The maps on the following page show host sites for all AmeriCorps*State programs. Cook county sites have been broken out for easier viewing. Counties that receive support from AmeriCorps*State Members are colored in beige. Host sites and their number of locations are listed in the keys on each map.
Volunteer Management Network

The Illinois Volunteer Management Network (VMN) seeks to cultivate an extensive resource network of voluntary agencies 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.

The state of Illinois is divided into four networks: Central, Northeast, Northwest, and Southern. Each region holds an annual conference that includes sessions and workshops targeted toward individuals who currently work with or are interested in working with volunteers.

2013 Conferences:

- Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference
  June 13, 2013 - Springfield, IL
  140 Participants

- Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration
  August 8, 2013 - Chicago, IL
  200 Participants

- Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference
  September 26, 2013 - Belleville, IL
  140 Participants

- Northwestern Illinois Volunteerism Conference
  October 18, 2013 - Moline, IL
  70 Participants
Disability Inclusion Project

The Illinois Disability Inclusion Project promotes inclusion of people of all abilities as members and volunteers in National Service Programs. To achieve this goal, Serve Illinois promotes service opportunities as a viable option to persons with disabilities and agencies that provide services to them. We encourage partnerships between National Service Programs and Disability agencies to work side by side to address needs in their communities.

Inclusive service experiences enhance the quality of life for all people, with and without disabilities. Inclusive service programs support opportunities for people with disabilities to actively take part in service activities with dignity in an atmosphere that promotes physical, social and psychological involvement of people with diverse experiences and skill levels.

The Commission offers Inclusion Team support, education and training, assessment and funding for accommodations, service day activities, inclusion planning, and outreach initiatives.

The Illinois Disability Inclusion Team (IDIT)

The Serve Illinois Commission initiated a Statewide Inclusion Team in May 2011. The IDIT reviews and makes recommendations regarding best practice and policies influencing the inclusion of members with disabilities in Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) programs; specifically the inclusion, recruitment, disclosure, and accommodation policies regarding members with disabilities. The team’s objective is to increase the number of persons with disabilities who participate in the CNCS programs. One of the Team’s focal points is to explore ways to promote an ethic of civic engagement, developing a continuum of service for people with disabilities throughout their life span. The IDIT has generated a Guidebook to Creating an Inclusive Volunteer Programs available on the Serve Illinois website. This Guide is intended for use by any volunteer program interested in acquiring tools for becoming more inclusive.

The IDIT will assist in providing updated information regarding trainings, resources, and other tools and/or links on the Disability Tag on the Serve Illinois website. The IDIT has committed to provide Inclusion Training to all the Volunteer Management Network Regional Conferences supported by the Commission. The IDIT will continue to provide supports and training to AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs (Foster Grandparent, Retired Senior Volunteer Programs, Senior Companion) throughout the state via webinar and/or conferences. The Serve Illinois Commission has committed to ongoing training to CNCS programs to continue to promote Inclusive practices utilizing the IDIT as a resource for training expertise/development.
Cities of Service

Founded in New York City on September 10, 2009 by 17 mayors from across the nation, Cities of Service aims to create a vibrant network of municipal governments effectively leveraging citizen service as a reliable, viable tool to achieve measurable impact on pressing local challenges. The coalition builds on the work of former New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, who created the nation’s first high-impact service plan in April 2009 and appointed the nation’s first municipal Chief Service Officer. By accelerating the service movement at the most local level—connecting local needs to the supply of willing volunteers in innovative and impactful new ways—Cities of Service aspires to create a new chapter in America’s longstanding history of service while making local government more effective.

Today, the Cities of Service coalition includes over 150 mayors, representing over 50 million Americans. Like the founding mayors, each coalition member has made a commitment to work with other mayors around the country and advance service strategies in their own city by crafting a high-impact service plan.

To become a City of Service, a Declaration of Service that highlights a commitment to community service and intention to create a service plan for the city must be signed by the mayor. There are no costs or requirements attached to becoming a City of Service, and once registered, a city will be eligible for a portion of a multi-million dollar grant pool each year. In 2013, Illinois’ own Campton Hills received a $25,000 Impact Volunteering Fund grant to train and engage volunteers in emergency preparedness.

Illinois continues to be a leader in the effort to make volunteerism a grass roots movement with more than 40 mayors pledging their efforts to community based volunteerism. Those cities include: Ashmore, Aurora, Belleville, Belvidere, Chatham, Chicago, Columbia, Campton Hills, East Moline, East St. Louis, Elgin, Evanston, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Glendale Heights, Hazel Crest, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Island Lake, Joliet, Kewanee, Libertyville, Markham, Midlothian, Moline, Montgomery, Mt. Vernon, North Chicago, O’Fallon, Olympia Fields, Palatine, Park Ridge, Peoria, Richton Park, Robbins, Rock Island, Rushville, Salem, Sauk Village, Silvis, Streamwood, University Park, and Waterloo.

If you would like more information on Cities of Service, please visit www.citiesofservice.org. To register as a City of Service, please contact info@CitiesOfService.org
Serve Illinois Newsletter

The Serve Illinois newsletter is issued three times per year—spring, summer and fall—and includes information about upcoming events and recent happenings. Volunteer programs throughout the state may submit articles about their programs or specific volunteers who have achieved noteworthy accomplishments. The fall 2013 newsletter was mailed to more than 7,000 individuals. The newsletter is also available online at the Serve Illinois website.

Serve.Illinois.gov

Serve.Illinois.gov was established in fall 2008 and is used by community-based organizations and individuals seeking to connect volunteer needs with volunteer resources. Organizations can post opportunities, and prospective volunteers can search for opportunities by zip code, county, state or category of service. There are currently more than 140,000 volunteer opportunities listed. The Serve Illinois Commission partners with Network for Good to coordinate statewide volunteer opportunities from multiple databases into one search that is available on the Serve.Illinois.gov website.

Thousands of individuals have utilized the Volunteer Opportunity Portal on the website to search for volunteer opportunities. The most popular searches are for opportunities that involve volunteering with animals and environment, followed closely by children and youth. These searches have led to visitors clicking on opportunities over 140,000 times.

Social Media

Serve Illinois achieved gains in social media platform engagement in 2013. Followers on Twitter rose from 310 on January 1st, 2013 to 520 on the last day of the year. Similarly, Serve Illinois Commission’s Facebook page experienced growth in ‘likes,’ increasing from 220 likes to 310. That’s on track with the previous 2012 year growth from 130 page likes.

Serve Illinois Blog

Though the blog that had previously been set up for Serve Illinois fell dormant for most of 2013, we’re happy to report that it has been revived with new life and enthusiasm. Moving forward, the blog will serve as an interactive opportunity for AmeriCorps members, Commissioners, and other members of Serve Illinois community to discuss service. The website and social media platforms will continue to be venues and resources for news and conversation regarding service.
The proper recognition of volunteers is an important component in any volunteer program, large or small. With ongoing issues relating to volunteer retention nationwide and in all types of organizations, the Serve Illinois Commission encourages some form of appropriate volunteer recognition. Although recognition is given on a national level and through private/service organizations, the Commission recognizes volunteers in the following ways:

The Governor’s Volunteer Service Awards

2013 marked the fourth year of the Governor’s Volunteer Service Awards in Illinois. These awards recognize individual volunteers through a statewide award program to highlight the importance of volunteerism and community service in the State of Illinois.

Awards are presented annually in April at the Executive Mansion in Springfield. Each year, Commissioners read the nominations and jointly decide on a winner in each award category. Awards are presented to one Youth (18 and under), one Adult (19-54 years old), one Retiree/Senior (55+ years old) and one AmeriCorps, Senior Corps member in each of the Commission’s five service regions across the state (Northeast, Northwest, East Central, West Central and Southern Illinois). 2013 was the first year a non-profit organization in each region was recognized for their volunteer work in addition to the other five categories. Nominees for each award category serve in one of the following focus areas: Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Conservation, Disaster Preparedness/Response, Health, and Veterans Affairs.

In 2013, the Commission received a record high 185 nominations from across the state. To see a list and short biography of current and past recipients of the Governor’s Volunteer Service Award, visit the Serve.Illinois.gov website.

Volunteer Recognition Certificates

These certificates, printed in full color on ivory parchment paper, are provided free of charge to volunteer programs in Illinois. Each certificate includes a name blank to be completed by the program, and the signatures of the Governor of Illinois, the Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary, and the Chair of the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. The certificates are available year-round by contacting the Commission and are a great way to recognize volunteers for their service. Over 1,800 certificates were distributed to volunteers in 2013.
National Service Recognition Day

The 2013 Illinois National Service Recognition Day was held on October 8, 2013 at the Prairie Capital Convention Center and the State Capitol in Springfield. Nearly 1,000 AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members from across the state took part in the event, which recognized programs and energized members for the upcoming service year.

The celebration began with lunch at the Prairie Capital Convention Center, and several speakers provided encouragement and professional development messages for members. Speakers included Erica Borggren, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and Jonathon Monken, Director of the Illinois Department of Emergency Management Services. Twelve breakout sessions were offered throughout the day to offer attendees a wide variety of volunteerism information. Three large service projects were also a part of the “Opening Day” of service: a Central Illinois Community Blood Center blood drive was on hand for donations, a food drive benefitting the Central Illinois Food Bank collected non-perishable food items, and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois hosted a pop tab collection to benefit the local Ronald McDonald House.

After lunch and break-out sessions, members then began their march from the Prairie Capital Convention Center to the State Capitol Complex. The march was led by city police cars and a fire engine. Many programs marched with banners displaying their program name; other members carried small American flags. On the steps of the Capitol, at the base of the Abraham Lincoln statue, members reaffirmed their Oath of Service to America. Brandon Bodor, Executive Director of the Serve Illinois Commission, led AmeriCorps members in the oath, proclaiming their commitment to a year of service to Illinois. The Serve Illinois Commission hopes members left the event with a renewed commitment to service and a feeling of excitement for their upcoming year of service.
To best prepare volunteer managers and Commissioners for the challenges they may face in the realm of volunteerism, the Serve Illinois Commission hosts multiple training sessions each year.

**Program Director Training**

Each year, Serve Illinois staff hosts mandatory training sessions for new and tenured AmeriCorps*State program directors. In 2013, the training occurred in August at the Regional CNCS Cluster Training. Through the training, program directors discussed challenges they have encountered within their organization and proposed solutions. They also shared ideas for strengthening performance measures, data collection systems, and data analysis. Attendees learned about fiscal and grants management, how to manage members, the basics of National Service, and received Commission updates.

**Commissioner Training**

Commissioner training sessions are held annually and are organized by the Commission staff. The 2013 training session was on October 9. Through the training, Commissioners learn duties and expectations and are educated on the best practices in Commission structure and organization. Additionally, they received reports from the National Association for State Service Commissions, and reviewed information in order to plan for service in Illinois.

**Cross Streams Training**

Serve Illinois offers and sponsors program development and training sessions for AmeriCorps*State programs and other National Service programs such as Senior Corps and Learn and Serve. Each year in October, Serve Illinois invites National Service programs to meet in Springfield for National Service Recognition Day (see page 17 for more information.) Additionally, Serve Illinois sponsors four regional Volunteerism Conferences (Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference (CIVC), Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration (ICOVA), Northwestern Illinois Volunteerism Conference (NWIVC), and Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference (SIVC).) These conferences are open to any volunteer managers, volunteers, National Service Members, and the general public. Each conference offers a wide array of information dealing with all facets of service.
Looking Toward the Future

Illinois State Service Plan

The 2013-2016 State Service Plan was developed through an open and public process in which all Illinoisans were encouraged to contribute feedback. The Serve Illinois Commission hosted a series of listening sessions in the fall of 2012 in the four regions of the state and invited all citizens to make public comment. Those who could not attend in person were invited to make public comment via a survey on Serve.Illinois.gov.

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

- The Commission will strengthen existing partnerships, while seeking valuable new ones, in order to close gaps of volunteerism across all communities.
- The Commission will engage in active outreach to gather input, build awareness, and carry out initiatives to elevate volunteerism in Illinois.
- The Commission will embrace diversity and inclusion, encouraging individuals of all abilities to join the volunteer sector.
- The Commission will explore and implement effective volunteer management systems to enhance community resilience
- The Commission will focus on its own sustainability, and on maximizing the value it adds to partners and sub-grantees.

To view the complete Illinois State Service Plan, visit the Serve Illinois Commission website and click on “Rules and Planning” beneath the “About Us” tab.