



SERVE ILLINOIS

Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service

Fall 2011

1,000 National Service Members Commit to Year of Service



Michael Matsey, AmeriCorps member with Public Allies, donates blood at the Red Cross Blood Drive, which was set up in the convention center for Recognition Day. AmeriCorps members donated enough blood to help 60 people in central Illinois.

Nearly 1,000 AmeriCorps and SeniorCoups members gathered in Springfield at the Prairie Capital Convention Center October 13 for National Service Recognition Day. Members traveled from across the state to take part in the event, which recognized AmeriCorps programs and energized their members for the upcoming year of service.

The event began with welcoming remarks from Ted Gibbs, Executive Director of the Serve Illinois Commission. Springfield's mayor, Mike Houston, then commended members for their service to the state. Next, Jill Heise, Chair of the Serve Illinois Commission, gave a short speech on the importance of volunteering and Julian Brown, Serve Illinois Commissioner, spoke about how the corporation and volunteers can work together. The keynote speaker for the day was Erica Severson-Denniston, a former AmeriCorps member at Project YES! in Chicago. Severson-Denniston is an experienced trainer and facilitator with 12 years experience successfully managing



Members from West Suburban PADS march in the parade to the Capitol.

individuals, teams and large-scale projects. She spoke to AmeriCorps members about how to maximize their service year by taking on leadership and skill building activities, and drawing upon their unique strengths. Severson-Denniston also led an additional afternoon session and discussed ways members could effectively manage their time between service and their personal or professional lives.



AmeriCorps members convene at the Capitol for their oath of service.

AmeriCorps programs were then recognized for their service to communities. Afterwards, members lined up outside the convention center and marched to the Capitol for the annual swearing-in ceremony. The parade was led by city police cars and a fire engine. Many programs marched with banners displaying their program name; other members carried balloons or small American Flags. At the base of the President Abraham Lincoln statue in front of the Capitol, Vice-Chair of the Serve Illinois Commission, Andrew Barbeau, led AmeriCorps members in an 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 Illinois.



“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



The city of Chicago has always been renowned. From its revival after the Great Fire of 1871 to its claim of the tallest skyscraper in the country, this City of Service is truly the perfect location for the 2012 National Conference on Volunteering and Service.

The National Conference on Volunteering and Service is ecstatic to call the country's third largest city "home" in 2012, and the Serve Illinois Commission is equally delighted that our state has the honor of hosting next year's conference. Chicago is an excellent choice for the conference host city. Chicago houses various nationally and locally recognized community-based organizations that provide service to the city's ethnically, racially and socially diverse neighborhoods. These organizations have been an essential component in building a sense of community in the city.

The conference is a great opportunity to network and connect with others through volunteerism and national service. If you recruit, manage, or train volunteers; if you want to learn and apply effective practices in an ever-evolving field; or if you are looking for ideas or ways to utilize volunteerism and service to strengthen your community; I highly recommend you attend the conference.

The 2012 National Conference on Volunteering and Service will be held in McCormick Place West at Lake Michigan on June 18-20. In partnership with Hilton, our host hotels will be the Hilton Chicago and the Palmer House. As a Chicago citizen and a proud advocate of community service, I could not be happier to see our state's largest city host the National Conference. I hope you will join us next June to celebrate and promote volunteerism in all realms of service.

Yours in Service,

Ted Gibbs
Serve Illinois Commission
Office of Governor Pat Quinn

From the Chair



This time of year is the perfect season to curl up on the couch with a mug of hot chocolate and count down the days until spring arrives. As the temperatures drop and the holiday season looms upon us, it is easy to simply stay inside and "hibernate" until the weather warms up again. However, it is important to remember that the needs of less fortunate do not magically diminish in the winter. If anything, these individuals' needs increase during the holiday season, particularly if they have families and young children for whom they must provide. Despite the snow and wind, it is still important for all of us to do our part in serving the community and its inhabitants. Bundle up, grab a friend and a warm drink, and contact a local homeless shelter, food pantry, or other organization to see what you can do to help. You can search for service opportunities at www.serve.illinois.gov.

Speaking of service, one of our large-scale days of service took place a few months ago on September 11. The Serve Illinois Commission issued nearly \$13,000 to programs throughout Illinois to fund service and remembrance projects in honor of 9/11. I would like to thank all programs who took part in this monumental event, and congratulate those who were recipients of the mini-grant. These programs' volunteer work was a spectacular start to this annual day of service, and they have paved the way for many more years to come.

Our next day of service is on January 16 – the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. What will you be doing to help others on this day? Visit www.mlkday.gov for ideas and motivational stories to inspire you.

Yours in service,

Jill C. Heise

Program Helps Formerly Incarcerated Citizens Prepare for the Workforce

Finding a job in today's market is hard for everyone. Adding time served for a past conviction makes it almost impossible. Returning citizens are not only faced with these types of challenges, they are also faced with other hardships, such as lack of education or job training, in particular. Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) has found a way to meet limited educational needs of returning citizens with the help of AmeriCorps and Southern Illinois University (SIU) by creating Employment Skills School (ESS).

ESS was developed by LSSI to meet the needs of formerly incarcerated men and women. The program, taught by AmeriCorps members who are studying workforce development at SIU, addresses the parolees' basic employment

needs such as developing a resume, accessing job information, understanding how to fill out an application, acquiring appropriate interview skills and understanding proper dress and appearance for an interview or job. The program also educates the men and women about behavior modification required for job placement, how to avoid workplace conflicts and how to manage income and avoid financial trouble.



Upon completion of Employment Skills School, students attend a graduation ceremony.

The majority of the ESS teaching staff is AmeriCorps members who have been recruited from SIU. Through SIU Work Force Development and the Department of Rehabilitation, interns come to LSSI because they are fully prepared to teach returning citizens. They embrace the responsibility as a prime way to get their own work force experience for their future.

ESS is making a big difference for the students that have chosen to participate in the program. A recent graduate was quoted as saying, "ESS was the opportunity to start anew. I had self-gratification, a desire to do more with my life. I finished something, and that is not something that I regularly do."

As the ESS Coordinator, I never get tired of hearing the students give thanks for the opportunity provided to them at LSSI. It has been a life changing experience for me as well. I love coming to work every day. Each day is a new experience in its own right. My job would not be possible if it weren't for AmeriCorps and SIU that led me down this wonderful path in my life. Thank you AmeriCorps for all of your support! I have found a way to give an education to those in need and get an education at the same time.

Submitted by Amanda Peckinpaugh, ESS Coordinator and AmeriCorps member at LSSI.



Commission on Volunteerism
and Community Service

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you should know

Serve Illinois Welcomes New AmeriCorps Programs

Three organizations have received formula grants to help fund their AmeriCorps program initiatives for the 2011–2012 program year. The programs are the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), Jobs for Youth and Volunteers of America (VOA of IL). ICIRR and Jobs for Youth were former recipients of last year's planning grant, which was issued by the Serve Illinois Commission.



ICIRR's Neighbor to Neighbor Program works together with ethnic community-based organizations to connect immigrants with native born Illinoisans through volunteerism. Through AmeriCorps service learning, particularly in the areas of English, civics, after-school tutoring and GED studies, Illinois citizens benefit not only through education received, but also through formed relationships and community-wide integration. Each AmeriCorps member is placed at ICIRR partner host organizations throughout the state of Illinois to build relationships and strengthen communities.

Jobs for Youth works with low-income young men and women between the ages of 17 and 24, and helps prepare them for the workforce. Jobs for Youth's Chicago Healthy Futures Project provides job readiness/life skills training, leadership and service opportunities for youth to engage in volunteerism. Members serve at the Westside Health Authority in Chicago and seek to promote awareness of health related choices impacting the quality of life.



VOA of IL provides housing and employment services to homeless veterans through its True North Project (TNP). The TNP program utilizes a community and strength-based approach to serving homeless veterans and helping them achieve stability and self-sufficiency. Veterans have access to job-readiness training that includes resume writing, mock interviews and job referrals, as well as peer support. The addition of 16 part-time AmeriCorps members, recruited from graduates of our TNP program, will allow VOA of IL to assist even more homeless veterans on their path to self-sufficiency with resources and tools to regain independence.

In addition to these three programs, the Serve Illinois Commission provides formula or competitive funding to 28 other AmeriCorps*State programs throughout Illinois. To see a complete list of these programs, visit www.serve.illinois.gov and click on National Service/AmeriCorps.



CONTACT US!
The Serve Illinois Commission is interested in learning what you and your organization did for the 9/11 Day of Service. To share your story (and any event photos) please email dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. Your organization may be featured in the next newsletter!

inclusion update

Statewide Disability Inclusion Team Created

The Serve Illinois Commission has moved forward with its plan to implement a statewide Inclusion Team. The team consists of 27 members from organizations across the state who has expertise and a shared vision pertaining to disabilities and Inclusion. The team's main goal is to facilitate discussion and make decisions regarding the best practice and procedures for establishing networks that will focus on the Inclusion and recruitment of service members with disabilities.

Additionally, the team will act in an advisory capacity in the development of strategies to promote Inclusion throughout Illinois Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) programs. Dialogue will cover Inclusive strategies in regard to training, accessibility, recruitment, accommodations and retention of members with disabilities in all CNCS funded programs and service events.

The team will participate in Inclusion Team Training on September 27. The training will be held at the Children's Home in Peoria, and it will be presented by the National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP). NSIP is a training and technical assistance provider on disability inclusion under a cooperative agreement from the CNCS.

The day-long training event will provide a formal meet and greet of all members, updates from the NW Regional Inclusion Team and Commission and an opportunity to envision and identify goals. The day will conclude with the construction of a strategic plan for the upcoming year.

For more information about the statewide Inclusion Team, see the Inroads to Inclusion articles on the Serve Illinois website or contact Lois Barnhart, Inclusion Officer, at barnhartl@kreiderservices.org or call 815.288.6691.

Submitted by Lois Barnhart, Kreider Services, Inc.

spotlight

Serve Illinois Commission Issues Nearly \$13,000 in Grants for 9/11 Service and Remembrance Projects

Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler and the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service presented 18 Illinois AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs with \$12,707.18 in mini-grants to support 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance projects throughout the state.

“As the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy approaches, we must come together as Illinoisans and Americans to show our respect for the victims, survivors, and the many that rose in service in response to the 9/11 tragedy, including first responders, volunteers, public safety officers and members of our military,” said Secretary Saddler. “The recipients of these grants work in their communities’ everyday to make Illinois a better place to live, and these 9/11 Service and Remembrance projects will only add to the positive impact of national service.”

The funding for the Day of Service and Remembrance projects comes from two federal grants awarded by the Corporation for National and Community Service; the Program Development and Training (PDAT) and Disability Inclusion grants.

ABC AmeriCorps was one of the recipients of a mini grant. Together with Sauk Valley Community College, ABC hosted a “Where Were You” September 11th Tribute Event on September 9th. The event included a Twin Tower Beam Exhibit, Ground Zero Respondent Presentations, and video and memorabilia displays. The AmeriCorps members led the Pledge of Allegiance and one member sang the National Anthem. Local schools, Whiteside Area Career Criminal Justice Class, the Civil Air Patrol, Red Cross, area police and fire departments, Criminal Justice Club, and students and staff from Sauk Valley Community College attended. Following the event the AmeriCorps members reflected after listening to ‘Where Were You’ by Alan Jackson.

Many organizations throughout the country took part in a service project in honor of the Day of Service and Remembrance. For a complete list of mini-grant recipients, see the “News and Publications” section of www.serve.illinois.gov.

Belleville AmeriCorps Alumni Lend a Hand in Joplin

After a devastating EF5 tornado ravaged Joplin, Missouri on a late Sunday afternoon in May, causing 159 deaths and destroying over 7,000 homes, AmeriCorps members from all over the country traveled to southwest Missouri to help the community. Belleville AmeriCorps alumni Currin Armstrong (of Mascoutah), Jenna Summer (of Troy),



A playground in Joplin shows the devastation left behind by the tornado.

along with Cassie Boeckman, Nick Johnson, Steve Kielbasa and Ben Taylor (all of O’Fallon), felt compelled to make the trip to help. The former AmeriCorps members worked with St. Louis AmeriCorps teams specially trained for disaster response to pick up debris, staff shelters, coordinate volunteers, and aid in communication.

The Belleville team made two trips to the devastated Joplin area. Less than a week after the storm, the Belleville crew made their first visit and even through the chaos, the crew was proud that AmeriCorps teams were leading the recovery charge. They worked harder than they ever had and felt fulfilled that they were helping a broken community put the pieces back together.

The second trip took the team to the outskirts of town where sheet metal and debris peppered trees about half a mile from what had been a Home Depot. AmeriCorps teams from Colorado, Texas, California, Oklahoma and Belleville worked together to clean up, rebuild and help families cope. The Belleville crew indicated that their trips to Joplin were the most gratifying experiences of their lives.

Recently Joplin made the national news when the Joplin High School was rebuilt and opened up for 2011 school year. The renovation process is ongoing and it will take time to replace the 7,000 homes and 2,000 buildings that were destroyed, but AmeriCorps crews once again have made a significant difference in the lives of so many in the Joplin area.

West Suburban PADS and AmeriCorps work together to expand program offerings, end homelessness



In 1992, a group of volunteers decided to take action in response to a growing problem of homelessness in the Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park communities of West Suburban Cook County. West Suburban PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) – launching its 20th shelter season this fall – has indeed responded to the problem of homelessness. Since its establishment, West Suburban PADS has:

- Provided 176,780 nights of shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Prepared and served 454,420 meals
- Prevented 1,011 persons from experiencing homelessness through short-term financial assistance
- Provided 177,058 nights of supportive housing

Today, West Suburban PADS is much more than an emergency shelter. It is an agency that is opening doors, building futures and ending homelessness in 20 communities with a comprehensive solution. “Our twelve AmeriCorps members have been instrumental in the expansion and enhancements of services in all of our program areas – shelter, housing, supportive services, employment readiness and prevention,” says Lynda Schueler, Executive Director of West Suburban PADS.



Candace Leitheiser is often the first AmeriCorps member clients meet to begin their transition out of homelessness. As Outreach and Engagement Specialist, she assesses the needs of shelter guests

and engages them in PADS services. Leitheiser takes a therapeutic approach: “Whatever their needs are, we work with them to help them change their own lives.”

Once outreached, many clients visit the Support Center in Maywood, which helps its clients access resources that are typically limited to them to help with their self-sufficiency, such as laundry, showers, or assistance with obtaining benefits or state IDs. Case Aide Melanie Ferguson says case aides do much more than sit at the front desk. “I’ve seen our Support Center become more

focused on outreaching and assisting clients in determining their own self-sufficiency goals and a plan to end their homelessness.”

Hallie Trauger, Benefits Coordinator whom West Suburban PADS shares with the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry, said in her position, “The most important thing I’ve been able to do is help clients understand their resources and rights,” which are not always clear when processes to obtain benefits are mired in paperwork and intricate steps.

Justin Wilson, Employment Counselor and Job Developer, motivates and prepares clients for their job search and future employment through the Career Passport employment readiness program. Wilson notes that, “Obtaining employment is key to ending homelessness. Without that stable income, homelessness can become a cycle.”

Supportive Housing is also available to clients who meet certain self-sufficiency requirements. Housing Locator Jamaine Lacey says, “Housing is a basic human need. Obtaining housing is the start to helping people move on to future successes. I’ve seen clients’ happiness and progression because of this program. It’s very rewarding.”



Clients also receive additional case management services to other supportive housing clients through Aftercare Case and Interim Housing. David Bates, self-described “clean-up man” as the Housing Case Aide, helps to prevent homelessness through short-term assistance. “I have the privilege of seeing my organization serve the needs of its constituents to the fullest. Seeing the impact on the people we serve...that’s what I get out of [my AmeriCorps service],” says Bates.

Schueler says, “AmeriCorps members, collectively and individually, play a critical role in our efforts to address the multi-faceted needs of men, women and families who find themselves without a home, a job, or support.” She adds, “The impact and value that AmeriCorps members have had on our service delivery capacity has been extraordinary.”

Submitted by Keith Lee and Justin Wilson, AmeriCorps Illinois members serving at West Suburban PADS.

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a Volunteer
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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.

Summit on Aging, Education & Service Held in Normal

The Summit on Aging, Education & Service was held September 26 at Illinois State University in Normal. This year's theme, "How Can I Help?" demonstrated the summit's goal of fostering education and communication between generations. The conference explored ways to tap the knowledge and skills of all generations to increase student achievement, particularly in reading and writing.

Topics discussed included the need to formulate successful reading programs for children, and issues of learning, service and work for Illinois citizens who are age 50 and older. A media workshop was held in the afternoon for student journalists interested in learning how to write for an older generation. The students learned how to write for television, newspaper and online publications whose target readers are older adults.

The students also hosted a technology workshop for older adults. At the end of the day, summit attendees also helped prepare an Eight-Point Action Plan for the state regarding how the generations can work together through communication and learn from each other.

Serve Illinois Welcomes New Employee



The Serve Illinois Commission is happy to announce the addition of a new Volunteer Programs Manager, Karla Kunzeman, to the commission staff beginning June 1, 2011. Karla served as the legislative liaison with the Illinois Arts Council for 20 years and most recently was in long term care rates for the developmentally disabled at the Department of Human Services. Karla has been involved as a volunteer for several Springfield organizations and nonprofits since she moved to the area in 1983 and believes that her life is made more gratifying because of giving back to her community. Karla and her husband, John, reside in Springfield and have two almost grown children.



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Upcoming Days of Service

January 16, 2012 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
www.mlkday.gov

April 15-21, 2012 National Volunteer Week
www.handsonnetwork.org

April 20-22, 2012 Global Youth Service Day
www.ysa.org/gysd



SERVE ILLINOIS is a publication of the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service. Send articles for submission and suggestions to:

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

This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under AmeriCorps Grant No. 07CAHIL001. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National and Community Service or the AmeriCorps program.

