

**Jesse White**  
Secretary of State  
& State Librarian

Adult literacy benefits many aspects of a person's life. Personal lives benefit, as is evident in Erie House's program where Spanish-speaking learners teach Spanish to their English-speaking tutors. As you read about the Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition's successful Career Opportunities Fair, you'll see how adult literacy positively affects people's professional lives. Adult literacy also helps families as highlighted in the 2007 Penny Severns Summer Family Literacy projects. All these programs are a testament to the power of literacy.



This issue marks the retirement of a valued Literacy Office employee who has given her talents to the adult literacy field for many years. We are going to miss Myra Johnson's passion, knowledge and experience in literacy. I thank Myra for her steadfast commitment to literacy in Illinois and wish her well in her retirement.

*Jesse White*

**Jesse White**  
Secretary of State & State Librarian

## Longtime literacy advocate retires

Myra Johnson, a Family and Adult Literacy consultant with the Illinois State Library's Literacy Office, retired in December. Myra has spent many years in the literacy field throughout Chicago, including a stint as executive director of Literacy Chicago. She worked in the Literacy Office as a consultant before joining the office full time in 1998.



Asked how she became involved in literacy, Myra says, "I saw an ad for the Literacy Council of Columbus, Ohio, while visiting and thought we must have one in Chicago, so I called up and became a volunteer tutor in 1982. I had no idea we had adults who couldn't read or write. I thought I'd be helping high school students write better paragraphs. What an awakening!"

Her fondest memories are seeing the look on her students' faces when the light bulb goes on and their whole expression is saying, "Oh, my goodness! I get it! I can do this!" We extend our best wishes to Myra for good health and a happy retirement.

## Language Exchange Program

Erie Neighborhood House in Chicago created the Language Exchange Program so Spanish-speaking adult learners could teach Spanish to English-speaking volunteer tutors.

The adult learners learn how to teach Spanish from an instructor with the Dominican University. Learners are given a copy of *Curriculum ¡En Español!*, by Harcourt Brace and Associates, Levels 1, 2 and 3, and taught how to use the book, movies, transparencies, tapes and other materials to teach Spanish to their tutors. Adult learners and tutors are matched according to their ESL levels and scheduled for a minimum of three hours a week for eight weeks. A volunteer tutor and adult learner work half the time in English and half the time in Spanish. Adult learners also teach the techniques to peers who reach the advanced ESL level.

This cycle of teaching helps Erie House maintain a cooperative team of adult learners and volunteer tutors. The program promotes leadership, social justice and a greater level of empathy among all participants as they discover the challenges of learning a new language.

For more information, please contact Susana Ortiz at 312-432-2257.