Illini Union Office of Volunteer Programs

Issues

Literacy:

Adult literacy is defined as: Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. Overall, it is estimated that 93 million U.S. adults have Basic and Below Basic literacy skills. This is unacceptable really seeing as literacy affects every aspect of one’s daily life. It affects their family life, their ability to bring in an income as well as their self-worth and in turn contribution to society. Unfortunately, only a fraction of low literate adults seek literacy services from community providers. Many people with low literacy do not perceive their skills as a problem until a crisis such as the loss of a job, a child’s need for school help with school, or a health care emergency makes them aware of their literacy needs.

According to the National Coalition for Literacy (2009) report:

- Adults living in poverty were more likely to have lower average literacy scores than adults with higher incomes.
- Half of the adults who did not have a high school diploma performed in the Below Basic levels.
- Seniors and the elderly over age 65 had the lowest average literacy scores of any age range, with 64 percent performing in the Basic and Below Basic level.
- The more than one million incarcerated adults in the nation had lower average literacy scores than adults in households on nearly every comparable scale (age, gender, educational attainment level, ethnicity)
- Foreign-born adults who came to the United States at age 19 or older are more likely to have lower English literacy skills than those who came at age 11 or younger. In 2003, 11 million adults in the United States were non-literate in English and 22 million adults spoke English less than “very well”

National & Local Literacy Agencies

National Coalition for Literacy

http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/litfacts.html

The mission of the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) is to advance adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition in the U.S. by increasing public awareness for the need to increase funding and programs; promoting effective public policy; and serving as an authoritative resource for the field on national adult education issues.
Midwest LINCS

http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/?

The Midwest LINCS, operating out of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, provides a link to national, regional, and state-specific resource material for adult literacy practitioners and students. Web sites have been developed for each state literacy resource center in the twelve Midwest states—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Each state's web site links with resources within the state as well as provides links to all adult literacy resources nationally. In addition, the Midwest state literacy resource centers provide training and assistance in accessing the Internet information to adult literacy practitioners and students in their states.

National Center for Family Literacy

http://www.famlit.org/

A wonderful organization that is dedicated to helping improve family literacy rates for the past 20 years. Prestigious Fortune 500 companies, national media and academic experts all recognize and support NCFL’s work. As important, the support of more than 150,000 teachers and thousands of volunteers help us build relationships that support learning, from teacher to student and, most importantly, from parent to child. Their goal to not only provide every family with the opportunity to learn, but the ability to learn and grow together. Family literacy ensures the cycle of learning and progress passes from generation to generation.