

# *Press Release*

Contact: Matt Berry  
Phone: 217/785-7411  
Email: [matt.berry@illinois.gov](mailto:matt.berry@illinois.gov)

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Adult Education and Literacy Programs Provide a Seamless Pathway to Employment Opportunities**

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Secretary of State Jesse White, and the State Library's Literacy office along with the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association (IACEA) invite you to join in a celebration recognizing September 21 – 26, 2015 as National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. Adult Education and Literacy programs serve adult students who need to improve their basic skills, learn English, obtain a high school equivalency, and transition to postsecondary education/training and employment. This observance of 49 years of Adult Education services is intended to underscore the value of programs and services that serve this population.

The passage of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) in July 2014 has placed a strong emphasis on acceleration of instruction to move individuals into postsecondary education/training and employment.

“Connecting adult learners to postsecondary education and training will have a tremendous effect on their future earning potential,” said Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, ICCB Executive Director. “Illinois has taken the lead in creating partnerships that coordinate services between education and workforce to ensure a seamless pathway for students that leads to high skilled and high demand employment opportunities.”

Nationwide, more than 93 million adults have basic or below basic literacy skills that limit their ability to advance at work and in education. In Illinois, more than 1.8 million adults lack a high school diploma or equivalent. While the number of adults with less than nine grades of education has increased by 26 percent since 2001, nearly 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs of the future will require education or training beyond high school.

“Filling the jobs of the future is dependent upon educating more adult students”, says Jennifer Foster, Deputy Director for Adult Education and Workforce. “It is critical that adult education students have the skills that will further their growth in education leading to greater career pathway opportunities in the workforce”

In addition to adult education programs throughout the state that provide comprehensive instruction to more than 87,000 learners each year, the Office of the Secretary of State and Illinois State Library Literacy Office supports literacy programs serving nearly 25,000 adult learners.

“I want to make sure every citizen of Illinois has access to quality literacy programs that help them reach their utmost potential and put them on a path to lifelong learning,” said Jesse White, Secretary of State and State Librarian. “Our local literacy programs are among the finest in the nation. I encourage citizens wanting to enhance their literacy education to reach out to these local providers.”

IACEA, the voice of adult education in Illinois, works closely with ICCB and the State Library Literacy Office and is a professional adult education organization whose mission is to provide leadership, representation and advocacy for adult education and literacy practitioners in order to advance, unify and professionalize the field.

“We appreciate the opportunity to shine a light on the exceptional work that our adult educators do to equip our students with college and career readiness skills that are foundational to their selection of a quality career pathway programs,” Kathi Lee, President of IACEA said.

For more information about Illinois Literacy and national adult education facts, visit the following websites:

- Illinois Adult Education: <http://www.iccb.org/adulted.html>
- IACEA: [www.iacea.net](http://www.iacea.net)
- National Coalition for Literacy: <http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/litfacts.html>
- State Library Literacy Office:  
[http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/who\\_we\\_are/literacy/home.html](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/who_we_are/literacy/home.html)

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