READING-----Is It Important?
By Mildred Harding

According to Bonnie Dern, kindergarten teacher at Lincoln School in Sterling, “Reading is the most important subject taught in our schools today. A good knowledge of reading will greatly enhance any other subject offered in school, or college. Reading is an absolute must for any occupation or career that you could be interested in.” Mrs. Dern has 23 kindergarten students in her class.

She has a basic phonics reading program that I have been privileged to be in charge of, that was started in late October. The goal of this program was to start the children off by reading basic phonics books. As the children progressed through the books they gradually got harder. The first set of books is at the easiest reading level, then the levels progress to intermediate, with each additional level getting harder. This year ended with five levels. Mrs. Dern said she has never had this many levels before. The first set of books contained 20 books; each successive level had 30 books.

On April the 8th the last five students completed reading the first 20 books, while other students had read varying numbers of books. The most read by one little girl was 83 books. The total number of books read by the children as of April the 8th was 1,020 books. The 2002-2003 school year will end soon. Watch for an update on the total books that this class has read by the last day of school.

Mrs. Dern has rewards for the children to encourage them to read. When a child completed reading the first 20 books they received a happy meal from McDonalds, after the next 30 books, no matter what the level of hardness, they received another happy meal. The BIG reward for another 30 books, which would make a total of 80 books, was going to a restaurant of the child’s choice with Mrs. Dern for lunch.

There were rewards for reading but there were also rules that had to be strictly followed. The child must know or be able to figure out a word by using the phonics they had learned. If they could not figure out a word then they would have to take that book home to practice it for the next day.

These books were read in addition to other reading books the child took home every day. I marvel at the foundation of reading that has been set in place for these children. It is my wish that this foundation will continue with them the rest of their lives. It has been a great pleasure to work with these children this year, to see their struggles, their discouragements and finally their pure joy when they reached a reward level. As a child got close to finishing a certain level he/she was encouraged to daily count how many books they needed to reach the next level. Their excitement and enthusiasm as they strived to reach the end, was a joy to watch. Also the children were very excited to show their parents just where they were on the wall charts that held their stickers for each book successfully read.

Tree Planting for National Youth Service Day
By Faith Stambaugh

On March 12, 2003 AmeriCorps worked with Phi Theta Kappa and other volunteers planting trees at Sauk Valley Community College and Franklin Creek State Natural Area in Franklin Grove for National Youth Service Day. We had three hundred trees total to plant. Each site got one hundred and fifty. We had three kinds

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kinds of trees to plant:  Hackberry, Northern Red Oak, and White Dogwood.  At the Sauk site members of Phi Theta Kappa and other volunteers planted trees.  At the Franklin Creek site we had AmeriCorps members, some of their children and other volunteers.  Steve Nunez, a Biology instructor at Sauk and also the advisor for Phi Theta Kappa showed how to plant the trees at Sauk.  At the Franklin Creek State Natural Area, Elmer Stauffer of the natural area, his son Cory and Jo Galvan, an AmeriCorps member with lots of experience planting trees, showed us how to properly plant them.

At Franklin Creek, the trees were being planted to help restore the forest preserve that had been cut down years ago.  The trees at Sauk Valley College were planted to beautify the area and to provide additional trees for the environment.  All of the trees that were planted were donated to AmeriCorps from the National Tree Trust for National Youth Service Day.

All in all, it was a good learning experience for many others and for me.  The trees will make the areas more natural and provide many different things for our surrounding communities in years to come.  I would like to thank all of the people that helped plant the trees.  I would especially like to thank Steve Nunez, Elmer Stauffer, Cory Stauffer and Jo Galvan for showing us how to properly plant the trees because without your help they would probably be less likely to survive.

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Book Bee 2003
By Katie Pyron

This year AmeriCorps members again volunteered to work at the Book Bee as monitors and questioners.  The Book Bee was a fun experience where we enjoyed asking the children in various age groups questions about books they read.

The books for each age group were listed on the registration.  Children needed to read these books and be able to answer each question correctly.  Each child received 6 questions and for each question answered correctly they received a ticket.  At the end of the sixth round, each child was invited to come to the table.  There they could exchange their tickets for prizes.  Then one ticket was pulled from the bag for the door prize, a gift certificate from Walden Book Store for $10.00.  Each child also received a free book, which they were able to choose from the table.

This Book Bee was fun, educational, and a great success.  I would like to thank Anita Elgin from the Sterling Library for organizing the Book Bee each year, and to Ryan Bradshaw, AmeriCorps member, for reading all the selected books and writing the questions.  I hope next year to see AmeriCorps volunteers invited to return, as we all had such a great time.  Thank you all who participated.

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PARENTING CONFERENCE AT ROCK FALLS HOLIDAY INN
By Natalie Bencini

On Saturday, March 29, the Sauk Valley Interagency Council held its annual family weekend event at the Holiday Inn in Rock Falls.  In attendance at this special weekend were children with special needs and their families from the Sauk Valley Area.  The weekend’s longest and busiest day was Saturday.  On that day, parents attended conference meetings from the early morning until late afternoon.  They listened to guest speakers, shared stories and ideas, and learned new tactics that assist them in parenting children with special needs.

How did members of the ABC Literacy Program play a role in these activities?  We served as childcare providers on Saturday for the children while parents attended the meetings.  My fellow members and I were each assigned a child with special needs or a sibling.  That child was our buddy from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

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Shortly after breakfast, we met our assigned buddies. Many of us were responsible for children who had special needs. The busy day ran smoothly, and at the end of the day many grateful parents made positive comments about the way we handled their children.

Of course, our director, Rebecca White, came prepared with many ideas, activities, snacks, games and supplies. The kids read books, made buttons, played with a variety of toys and created their very own tote bags and hats. Also, the sitters and their children could spend time in the “quiet room”, which served as an area to settle down, watch movies and even nap!

Lunch was donated by McDonalds, Burger King and Wal-Mart, which pleased both little ones and adult buddies! The hour following lunch was spent napping, watching movies and playing quietly. Then it was time for highlight of the day. The Easter Bunny arrived and all of the youngsters scampered through the yard in the back of the hotel searching for eggs he had hidden. As soon as their buckets were full, the children had their pictures taken with the fuzzy visitor and enjoyed the sweet treats hidden inside the plastic eggs.

Finally, the Saturday with our little companions ended. At about four p.m., the children were returned to their parents. The families were reunited to spend the evening eating pizza and swimming in the hotel’s indoor pool. After such an exciting day, I highly doubt any of the parents had difficulty putting their kids to bed! We AmeriCorps members, exhausted but pleased with the success of the day, cleaned up and returned home. Another rewarding, action-packed day as an AmeriCorps member came to an end!

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**RED CROSS TRAINING**

Part 11

By Katie Pyron

In the last article we covered the first half of the training which consisted mostly of what a disaster is, where the Red Cross fits in, how you can help, shelters and how they operate, assessment of damage and recovery after the disaster. The second half of our training consisted of being more hands on with the public, and their problems in a disaster. We trained in Family Services, CPR/First Aid, and National Volunteering. All these classes were geared towards working with the public, and treating the person’s needs.

The Family Services training was held on February 8 and repeated on February 15, for those who could not attend the first one. The training was geared towards helping the needs of the victim on a more personal level, such as counseling and comforting.

The CPR/First Aid segment took place on Feb. 22nd in the West Mall of SVCC. Colleen, Linda, and Sharon were there to instruct the course. We learned all the correct ways to perform the Heimlich maneuver on a choking victim, including adults of all sizes, children, infants, and pregnant women. The training included the proper way to handle a conscious or unconscious choking victim. Also what to do if the victims are not responding to the care given.

We then continued on to the rescue breathing and how to perform it on adults, children, or infants, when we should use it, and all the proper ways to perform rescue breathing. Rescue breathing naturally leads into CPR training. CPR is not a way to revive a victim and does not necessarily mean they will survive, but by performing it on a victim you give them a better chance of survival. CPR keeps oxygen filled blood going to all the major organs while waiting for further care to be provided, either by an EMT, paramedic, or the hospital and doctors.

A new part of the training included the Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). This device sends a shock to the victim in much the same way a defibrillator in the hospital does but on a much smaller scale. Each minute a victim goes without being shocked can lower their change of survival. That is why it is so important to make these devices more available in at-risk places. Some places, such as airports, auditoriums, and stadiums, already carry these devices. Also in some towns the police have been equipped with a portable device in their car. However, these are still very expensive and unfortunately that makes them harder for most places to carry.

AED’s are used along with CPR. Usually a rescuer begins CPR while an AED is located and CPR continues until the person with the AED is prepared to take over the situation. You never stop CPR until a medic arrives to take over, an AED arrives and you are told to stop while it works, or you are unable to continue. This is one thing we learned that is very important to the victim’s chances of survival.

Another is to only perform CPR if you have current training, due to the fact you could harm the person. Training changes after awhile, and in the event the victim files a lawsuit and you aren’t currently a card carrier you may have big problems.

A number one part of giving care is getting and giving as much info to the authorities as possible, whether you are the person who calls the emergency number or you are the person who gave the care. The more you tell them the better the care they can provide the victim.

One session that was postponed was to cover National Volunteering. A national volunteer reports to help in situations such as 9-11-01 or a major disaster elsewhere in the United States. National Volunteers provide a much-needed service because they report when the local chapter can no longer handle the large number of (continued on page 4)
victims. This greatly helps in giving the best care to all
the people affected by the disaster and helps give the local
volunteers a chance to recover so they too can be at their
best abilities. This was essential during and after 9-11.
Many volunteers from all over the country were in the
New York area providing care in shifts that could last as
long as 15-24 hours.

In conclusion, no matter what Red Cross training
the AmeriCorps members attended, they walked away
feeling well informed on the topic. All the instructors did
did a great job and many of the people attending have gone on
to sign up to be a volunteer with the local chapters. I feel
this was a large benefit to the community, and would be a
good program to continue to utilize. A big thanks to the
instructors, Rebecca White, and to AmeriCorps for
providing this opportunity to all of us. Also, to Sauk
Valley College for allowing us use of classrooms and the
West Mall.

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ABC Literacy Program
Sauk Valley Community College
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Dixon, IL 61021


AmeriCorps Gives Back to Red Cross

You have read in this newsletter and the last issue
of the great training provided by the Red Cross to our
AmeriCorps program. Well, AmeriCorps in turn was able
to give back to the Red Cross. A special donation was
taken by our program to buy blankets for the Red Cross.
Each chapter, Land of Lincoln and the Lee/Ogle, received
$60.00 for the purchase of blankets. We were glad to help
the Red Cross, as they help others.

AmeriCorps Benefits Children (ABC) Literacy
Program is a venture, sponsored by Sauk Valley
Community College, whose mission is to help raise the
reading levels of children in local schools, and promote
volunteerism within the community. If interested, call
Rebecca White at 815-288-5511 ext 313, or email
whiter@svcc.edu