Members of the ABC Literacy team met at the Brandywine in Dixon recently to reflect upon their first six months as AmeriCorps members. On this sunny, snowy February 7th the members enjoyed a fun day of activities – some that challenged their minds and others that brought about an “aha” moment.

The day started with everyone writing a little something about his or her fellow members. This was an interesting activity that helped get everyone in that reflecting mood. Each of us was given a badge with different stickers that later connected us as groups.

All and all this event was a great team builder. As each activity progressed the mood in the room switched from friendly competition (tower building and scavenger hunt) to enjoying friendly conversation and voicing our opinions. We had a lot of fun doing activities that made us laugh. The group gathered together in a circle to test their ability to work as a unified group. The group soon realized how to finally pull it together and accomplish Ooni Koni Cha, a song with hand motions. We learned a lot about each other and how we each feel about the AmeriCorps program. As some second year members reflected on their time with AmeriCorps, the first year members now must think about the option of rejoining for a second year.

We ended the day realizing how well this group of strangers has come together to form an interesting group of AmeriCorps members. We may not follow the same drummer or be able to remember a song but as a group we somehow----Get Things Done.

AmeriCorps members Dan Aiston, Lena Alba, Beth Ruefer-Nease and Kate Pyron work on their newspaper tower during one of the team-building activities at the Reflection Retreat in February.
Bowl for Kids’ Sake took place this year on Saturday March 6th and Sunday March 7th at Plum Hollow in Dixon. Many different teams were there from different civic organizations and businesses. Besides AmeriCorps there were members of the Chamber of Commerce, employees from Wal-Mart, and others. On this day many people came together to help the Big Brothers Big Sisters program of the Sauk Valley area. At the same time everyone had a lot of fun. The total money raised for that day was about $2,000, with a grand total of more than $10,000 raised over the weekend.

There were many people whose names were announced because they brought in more than $100. One of which was AmeriCorps own Faith Stambaugh with $125. Great job Faith! The top person for the day had brought in $300 in donations and was honored with a signed bowling pin. Everyone who brought in more than $50 was given a Bowl for Kids’ Sake T-shirt.

The AmeriCorps members participating were Davia Merced, Team Captain, Lena Alba, Tiffany Cobane, Faith Stambaugh, Kate Pyrin, and substitute bowler Anthony. AmeriCorps top two bowlers were Anthony Coman and Davia. Great job!

Everyone had a great time and it even got a little competitive toward the end. We all got a laugh at our occasional gutter balls and a good job when we could only take down a few pins. One of the greatest scores was Tiffany’s last frame when she bowled a strike! Good job to all my fellow bowlers and I hope to team up with you again. (See pictures on the back page.)

Sterling’s Jefferson School, with grades pre-K through 2nd is my site. We have an after school program for 1st and 2nd graders that runs from 2:55 to 3:30 p.m. This group consists of students that are tutored in literacy during the day and benefit from extra tutoring after school. They also receive help with their homework at this time.

To make it fun for the group we periodically have a “Fun Day” or “No Homework Day.” On one of our Fun Days we read *The Rose in my Garden* by Arnold Lobel. Then we helped children begin their very own flower garden. Each child got to pick from an array of flower seeds. Then in a small pot we planted each seed. The child is then responsible for watering it and making sure it gets enough sun. This not only teaches the child about plants but also about the responsibility of caring for something, nurturing it and watching it grow.

Sometime during second grade, children begin to transition from picture books to chapter books. There are many authors today that write books that makes this transition easier.

Some of these books include the *Judy B. Jones* series, *The Horrible Harry* series, the *Nate the Great* series and the *Magic Tree House* series. You will find that students in first through third grades love these books. Instructors can tie the stories in with other subjects such as life skills or social behavior, problem solving, and also history or research.

I have found the *Magic Tree House* series to be wonderful in working with second graders adjusting to chapter books. With third graders I like to tie in the story with a research project or writing project. So try a transitional book with your young reader and open up the mind to a whole new world of reading chapters!

The second of March marked the beginning of the month and the 100th birthday of Dr. Seuss, famous author of children’s books. It is on this day that many classes celebrate by doing interesting projects and reading from one of his many books. My class made green eggs and ham, and made cats in hats known.

The occasion was celebrated in San Diego, CA where Seuss and his wife lived until his death. In San Diego there is a library dedicated in his honor and a postage stamp has debuted as part of the year long “Seussentennial.”

Along with his hometown, many other groups celebrated. One of these was the National Education Association who sponsored “Read Across America.” They urged everyone to take part by putting down what they were doing, then read a book. This year many teachers and librarians donned red and white striped Seuss hats like the one in *The Cat in the Hat* then read from a favorite Dr. Seuss book.

Others did projects like reading the book *Green Eggs and Ham* and then proceeding to make the famous dish. Teachers sometimes find that children get grossed out as soon as any color is added to ordinary food. However, it’s all in good fun.
Some places such as the public library in Rock Falls organized a birthday party that was held in the evening. Crafts, cakes, and a special guest were all part of the festivities. Many places and many schools all coming together to celebrate the birthday of a legend.

The author Dr. Seuss wrote many books that adults and children of today have grown up with. These books will continue to fascinate and interest. Many hold a special meaning, or moral, but some are just for fun. Hats off to you Dr. Seuss on your 100th Birthday!

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

By: Lena Alba

*The Rose In My Garden*
By: Arnold Lobel
Pictures by: Anita Lobel

This story is about a bee, a rose, and lots of other kinds of flowers you would find in a garden from bluebells to zinnias. Along with beautiful illustrations, this book gives children a little more knowledge and interest in different kinds of flowers. This book also has lots of repetition for early readers. This repetition helps the reader become familiar with words and helps keep knowledge fresh in their minds.

*The Snowy Day*
By: Ezra Jack Keats

This story is an old, but good story with a copyright date of 1962. The setting begins one winter morning. A little boy named Peter wakes up and looks out his window to discover that snow had fallen during the night. Everything is covered as far as the eye can see. The story goes on to describe how clad in his red snowsuit Peter goes out to enjoy the day. This story would be a great story to read to your child. Then afterward ask them to write about what they might enjoy doing on a snowy day. If the child is too young to write have them draw you a picture.

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**Member Spotlights**

By: Faith Stambaugh

Kathy Jo Raymond is one of our first year members. She was born on April 2nd. Kathy has two children. One is David who is 12 years old and the other is Monika who will be 10 on July 26th. She and the children live with her mom and dad who help take care of all of them. Kathy’s favorite foods are potatoes and pasta. She likes to play Yahtzee with her family and friends during her occasional free time. Her favorite holiday, like many others, is Christmas because she loves to watch her kids and family open presents and try to find out what Santa brought them. If Kathy could have any job in the world she says it would be “owner of the winning lottery ticket, or an aide to a wonderful, creative teacher.” She also says that if she could meet one person, dead or alive, it would be Santa so she could ask him where he’s been all these years. Finally, Kathy says that the most important thing in her life is her kids.

The next member on this month’s spotlight is Sharon Krosch who is also a first year member. Sharon’s birthday is on December 15th. She says that she has the most wonderful husband in the world. Her favorite food is Mexican, and her favorite board game is Monopoly because she actually knows how to play it. Sharon enjoys Christmas more than any other holiday because her family visits the decorations, warmth, comfort, and lots of good food. If she could have any job in the world she would be teaching elementary school, because she loves the kids! Sharon also says that if she could meet one person, dead or alive, it would be Winston Churchill because he is a fascinating character who lived in an important historical time. The most important thing in her life is her family.

Our third spotlight Beth Ruefer-Nease, one of our second year members. Her birthday is on December 8th. Beth’s family consists of her twin sons, Travis and Lucas, and her husband Vern. She likes to eat Mexican food and pasta. Her favorite board games are Clue, Monopoly, and Life because they are old favorites of hers that she played as a child and still enjoys. Beth is another one of those people who says that Christmas is their favorite holiday. She likes Christmas the best because it is a great family time, and she also enjoys the religious part of the holiday. If Beth could meet one person in the world, dead or alive, it would be Martin Luther King Jr. because she thinks he was a great, inspiring person. Another interesting fact about Beth is that if she could have any job in the world it would be a teacher or a social worker for lost dogs that need a home.

Last but not least, our final spotlight for this issue is Tiffany Cobane. She was born on November 1st. Tiffany is married to Anthony and they have 23 horses, which they consider their kids. Her favorite food is chicken, straw mushrooms, and baby corn. Her favorite board game is Das Mahlevitspiel because it’s different and it is fun. Tiffany’s favorite holiday is Halloween because it is the day before her birthday. If Tiff could have any job in the world it would be to write for Equus. It combines two things she is passionate about.

So there are a few more of our members in the ABC Literacy Program. In each issue some members are profiled. We love our kids and we love our commitment because we are getting things done!
A chance experience I have enjoyed
My time I have given you
Everyday is a new experience
Reading is your objective
I want to know you can
Children all need our help
Only time with them will tell
Responsible is what I feel today
Peace and fulfillment is what I aim for
Service to community is what you’re all about

AmeriCorps

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

ABC Literacy Program
Sauk Valley Community College
173 Illinois Route 2
Dixon, IL 6102

Lena Alba, Davia Merced, Tiffany Cobane and Anthony Coman wait for Bowling for Kids’ Sake to begin.