

News Releases

Nov. 21, 2006

Intergenerational Leadership Program Launched

“Aging is an Asset.” That was one of the themes at the DeKalb School District’s Intergenerational Leadership Program launch on Monday, Nov. 20. More than 70 people attended the event in the Terrace Room at Hopkins Park.



Dr. Jane Angelis, of Southern Illinois University, was the keynote speaker. Angelis, Director of the State of Illinois Intergenerational Initiative, described how she became interested in intergenerational programs and how such programs have worked in other school districts. Angelis, who is the editor of *Continuance Magazine*, used the cover of the Spring/Summer 2006 issue, “Aging is an Asset,” as a PowerPoint backdrop for a discussion of how schools can benefit from senior citizen volunteers.

The DeKalb Intergenerational Leadership Program is being coordinated by The Stearnes Group, a Chicago consulting firm headed by DeKalb native Robin Stearnes. Intergenerational programs are volunteer programs that bring together individuals from different generations to work together on activities which benefit the entire community. The program can involve retirees helping elementary students with reading or other subject areas, career professionals explaining their jobs to middle school students, or adults of any age serving as mentors or just an extra set of hands in a classroom. Principals at the launch event noted that there are plenty of opportunities available in their buildings.

Russ Marineau chairman of Naperville District 203’s HURRAH (Happy, Upbeat Retirees [and other] Residents Actively Helping) program also spoke at the event. He provided information on how the program has worked in Naperville schools.



Angelis and Marineau mentioned a number of ways volunteers serve in other school districts: pen pals, homework assistance after school or during study halls, recording books on tape, and sharing personal recollections of historic events such as World War II, just to name a few. They also stressed that learning can go both ways. As one example, Marineau said Naperville students offer computer training for senior citizen volunteers.

DeKalb’s Intergenerational Leadership Program is an outgrowth of a State of Illinois Intergenerational Initiative. On November 1, 2005, Senate President Emil Jones, Jr. convened a forum of students and retired faculty in the Illinois Senate chamber to discuss how younger and older generations could work together for education. The event was sponsored by the Intergenerational Initiative at SIU Carbondale and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.



Superintendent Paul Beilfuss expressed enthusiasm about the program’s possibilities and said the District will form a steering committee to keep the momentum going.

Robin Stearnes, Dr. Paul Beilfuss,
Dr. Jane Angelis, and Ron Marineau