

## Preparing for the Year of the Volunteer

### DuPage Engaged: Helping Those Who Want to Help

Inspire. Educate. Engage.

Members of the DuPage Engaged Coalition will use that three-pronged approach to help county residents become more aware of the incredible value that volunteers bring to the community—and of the ways that they can share their own talents through civic engagement during the Year of the Volunteer.

The coalition, headed up by the DuPage County Regional Office of Education (ROE), will spotlight volunteer work being performed in its network: Schools and educational groups, libraries, faith-based communities, and other local organizations. Later this fall, the group will contact network members to remind them about the Year of the Volunteer and encourage them to step up volunteer efforts in their own communities. “There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to volunteering,” says Regional Superintendent Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, “and we know that people know the needs of their own communities the best.”

In 2015, the group will spotlight individual projects throughout the county. While a variety of media will be used—print, local television, podcasts, live events—the goal will be the same: Provide



DuPage Regional Superintendent Darlene Ruscitti speaks during a Senate Forum.

practical, hands-on opportunities and resources to show people how they can help. Each project will offer a template for involvement, says Dr. Ruscitti, describing the project’s background and purpose, how it uses volunteers, and what residents can do to get involved. “They may choose to get involved in that project, create a similar program in their own communities—or get inspired to try something completely new,” says Dr. Ruscitti. “Whichever path they choose, DuPage Engaged wants to give them the information they need to put their talents to work.”

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### Plans for IMRF

By Louis Kosiba

As a public pension plan with 173,000 working members and 107,000 retirees, the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) is in a unique position to encourage members and retirees to consider volunteering in their communities. Illinois communities have great needs and IMRF participants are a great resource.

In 2015, the Year of the Volunteer, IMRF will launch a major communication effort using multiple communication tools (newsletters, websites, Facebook, Twitter) to inform our members of the opportunities available to them. IMRF recognizes many individuals would willingly volunteer if they only knew how and where. Moreover, IMRF wishes to promote a healthy, meaningful and enjoyable retirement for each of its current and future retirees.

Research shows that a retiree who is engaged in her or his community will experience a richer life worth living.

Louis Kosiba is the executive director of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund.