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2023 Illinois Community College Trustees Association Distinguished Alumnus Award Recipient, Ruth Johnson Colvin.

Ruth Johnson Colvin Selected as Recipient of 2023 Illinois Community College Trustees Association Distinguished Alumnus Award

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL—Ruth Johnson Colvin, a graduate of South Suburban College (SSC), formerly known as Thornton Junior College (TJC), was selected as the 2023 recipient of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) Distinguished Alumnus Award. Johnson Colvin attended the College from 1934 to 1936. This centenarian (born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 16, 1916) has trailblazed a unique path in her field and is commonly referred to as the mother of Adult Literacy.

SSC President Dr. Lynette D. Stokes attended the ICCTA annual awards banquet at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center on Friday, June 2, 2023. "It is an honor to accept this recognition on behalf of an extraordinary alumna who has dedicated her life to serving her community, this country, and the world at large through her literacy efforts," Stokes remarked. "Her unwavering dedication to her passion for helping others is truly

inspiring." While Johnson Colvin could not attend the awards banquet, she did send brief remarks about receiving the award, "As you know, Chicago, Illinois, was my childhood home, so I was honored to be given such an outstanding award from the ICCTA. A big thanks, and I hope to help all to be able to read and write. I believe being literate is most important. "

Upon earning an associate's degree, Johnson Colvin studied at Moser Business College and Northwestern University before earning a bachelor's degree in 1959 from Syracuse University. After reading about the illiteracy rate of citizens living in Syracuse, New York (NY) during the 1961 Census Data Report, Johnson Colvin became an agent of change and launched Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) in 1962. In 2002, LVA merged with Laubach Literacy International and became ProLiteracy Worldwide. This non-profit organization has served more than 300,000 adult learners.

Johnson Colvin's early literacy work aided in recruiting volunteers to be trained as tutors to teach the illiterate population. Her undertaking produced partnerships with various colleges and organizations worldwide in training to eradicate illiteracy. Her curriculum encouraged the autonomy of adult learners while building a profile based on the individual needs of each learner.

While Johnson Colvin's work began in NY, her literacy efforts have expanded internationally. She worked to eradicate illiteracy from more than 26 developing countries during her travels to train others and spearhead grassroots ventures focused on literacy education. Her passion for literacy is also evident through her publication of tutoring books and the pedagogical teachings of English to adult learners.

Currently, *Tutor 8*, one of 15 books authored by Johnson Colvin, is used in the Adult Education department at South Suburban College. "Ruth's Tutor curriculum has shaped how volunteer literacy programs are run nationwide for decades," stated Dr. Matthew Beasland, SSC Executive Director of Extension Services & Workforce Development.

Former President Ronald Regan acknowledged the efforts of Johnson Colvin's advocacy for literacy as she earned the President's Volunteer Action Award in 1987. She was also inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame in 1993 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from former President George W. Bush 13 years later. The former President noted, "Ruth Colvin is a person of intelligence, vision, and heart. And she has earned the gratitude of many and the admiration of us all."

"Ruth has received some of the highest honors and awards that can be bestowed upon an individual," SSC Board of Trustees Chairman Terry R. Wells wrote in his letter of support to the ICCTA. "However, the most important title one can call her is an alumna of SSC. She truly represents SSC's mission of serving *through lifelong learning*."

"I met my husband, Bob Colvin, while attending TJC, who was the love of my life," Johnson Colvin remarked. "My time at TJC was an excellent two years, I had outstanding teachers, and

while attending community college, I developed a passion for wanting more. I'll always remember the community college experience."

The South Suburban College Main Campus is located at 15800 South State Street in South Holland, IL. Registration is underway for the Summer and Fall 2023 Semesters. Courses for the Summer 2023 Semester begin the week of Monday, June 5. Classes for the Fall 2023 Semester begin the week of Monday, August 21. Call the Office of Admissions at (708) 210-5718 or email admissions@ssc.edu for information about the enrollment process at SSC.

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