

Volunteer of the Year – West Central Wisconsin

Valjean J Adams

African American Mutual Assistance Network (AAMAN), Inc.

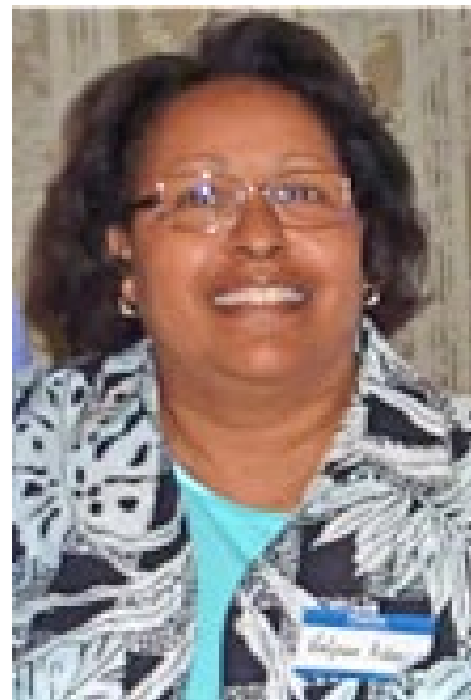
Governor's
Service Awards



Over the last two decades, Valjean Adams has dedicated her time and energy to positively shaping the future by providing educational opportunities and support to children, as well as supporting partnerships to address issues of diversity and inclusion.

Twenty years ago, Valjean co-founded the African American Mutual Assistance Network (AAMAN), Inc., an organization dedicated to providing at-risk children from low-income families with the resources needed to equip them for a successful and productive life. Over the years she served in multiple leadership roles with AAMAN, including as its Board President and Secretary/Treasurer. She also participated in the UW-Systems' Diversity Counsel under former UW System President Ray Cross, representing AAMAN.

Wanting to provide educational opportunities for low-income families while inspiring children to learn, Valjean worked through AAMAN to create the Clara Fields Multicultural Literacy Program, which started serving children from La Crosse and Onalaska in 2007. Knowing that children are at risk of educational struggles because of a lack in literacy skills, she strove to create prolific readers of Pre-K children by the time they enter kindergarten and assist K-2nd graders that may have missed a solid reading foundation and needed to bolster their skills.



For over a decade, Valjean undertook numerous roles, including leading the management and implementation of the Pre-K Reading Program, training volunteers and staff, collaborating with volunteers and staff to plan instructional activities and lessons, organizing program graduations, completing grants, and collaborating with local schools and nonprofits.

These efforts had tangible results for the children attending Clara Fields, with one parent explaining that "My son attends this program, and it has done wonders for him! He gets individualized interaction with teachers...(and) a varied multi-sensory approach is used to teach these young children, which is engaging and fun. My son has built so much confidence and will enter Kindergarten this fall reading fluently... and already reads for fun."

Recounting the personal impact Valjean had on their child, another parent explained that "my son was diagnosed with childhood apraxia of speech at 20 months. Research suggested entering an early reading program because it is likely that my child will have more difficulty learning to read. Mrs. Adams said she would take him the minute she heard my story, even before he started speaking sentences. After seven months (age three), my son is beginning to read. But they are not only helping with reading... My son struggles with fine motor, so she focuses on it with him...This program has been vital to the neurological development of my child."

In summarizing the impact and approach Valjean had for students, a parent described that "Mrs. Adams prides herself in teaching each child as an individual" and that she "somehow manages to offer zero tolerance for bad behavior while still getting hugs from her students at the end of the day."

