

Census 2000: Chance for a role that counts

By SCOTT WILLIAMS

Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — Here I come, America.

You are looking at the newest recruit in our country's largest-ever peacetime mobilization: the 2000 census.

I signed up Tuesday for a chance to be part of history as a census-taker. Assuming I qualify, I will start scouring the neighborhoods this spring, working to establish the official national head count for the 21st century.

It should be quite a departure from my usual duties as a reporter. But then again, maybe not. The introductory video shows census-takers getting doors slammed in

their faces. Looks like just another day on the job.

Still, I hope the experience of canvassing door-to-door for the U.S. Census Bureau will teach me a few things about this place called Rockford — and about that much-maligned institution known as the U.S. government.

My first step Tuesday came inside a small conference room at Patriots Gateway Center, the new community center on Fifth Street. Instructors were there to explain the job and administer a test.

I was surprised to see more than a dozen other applicants. Somehow, I never thought of

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