



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING DATE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2010

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| Session: | Public Session |
| Subject: | Children's and Youth Services Update |
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| Presented By: | Susanna Hubbard Krimmer |
| Purpose of Report: | For Receipt and Information Only |

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Library Board receive this report.

Issue / Opportunity

In 2009, a wide range of services for Children and Youth were offered which focused on literacy and learning. Outreach, community engagement and passionate and enthusiastic staff members were key to the success of the various services and initiatives offered.

Background & Review

- The Library hosted the 2nd annual **Community Celebration of Family Literacy Day** in January. By partnering with other community agencies, we were able to create an event that attracted over 300 children and their families from across the city. Interactive and hands-on literacy activities, live theatre, puppetry, cookie decorating, face painting, draw prizes and pizza sale highlighted the 4-hour event.
- The theme of the 2009 **TD Summer Reading Club** was "Agent 009". Designed to foster a love of reading, to encourage children to read throughout the summer, and to act as a reading bridge between school years in a fun way, this year's program was a hit. A total of 5446 children participated, read over 22,000 books and wrote over 10,000 book reports! These numbers all represent increases over the previous year. Our ever popular and unique game board was designed around the detective theme and led children around "Clueville" to solve Lady X's mystery and to choose the next book to read, and each trip around the board advanced the children's "spy level". In addition, reading incentives were given after each book read and weekly draw prizes were held. The theme lent itself to fun and creative ways to promote the program:

librarians visited school classes dressed as detectives; a video was created starring young detective agents; each Library location had an “Agent 009” basset hound mascot; a special song was written and performed by a library staff member, Noële Hall, and sent out to schools to play on their announcements; and of course, it was promoted widely in the Library and on our website. Special attention was given to taking the program out into the community to reach children who might not be able to get to the Library; through many of our community partners and the Libro Library Road Show, 340 children participated off-site on a regular basis. Generous donors and sponsors helped to make this year’s summer reading club a success!

- **Reading Rocks** was a new initiative in 2009 designed to demonstrate the many ways that families can easily and affordably make literacy a part of their daily activities. Made possible by a donation by EDPRO Energy Group, these regular neighbourhood-based family literacy events were held at 10 Library locations. In total 40 Reading Rocks events were held and attracted over 1600 children and their families. Each 90-minute event included literacy-based games, crafts and activities, handout with literacy tips for families, and draw prizes. These have proven to be very popular with families, staff and volunteers.
- The donation to children’s literacy by EDRPO Energy Group also allowed us to create **Literacy on the Go** kits for each Library location. With literacy-based games, activities and handouts, these kits can be taken to community events where the Library is involved and provide a ready-made family literacy program that can be easily implemented at various venues and in various ways.
- The **R.E.A.D. Program** (Reading Enjoyment and Development) provides one-on-one reading assistance to children who have difficulty reading. Held at 7 locations, the success of this program lies with the dedicated volunteers who provide the one-on-one assistance during the school year, the Volunteer Administrator who recruits and selects volunteers, and the Literacy Facilitators who run the program, match children with volunteers, and oversee all pairs. In 2008-9, 72 pairs met weekly. This school year we have approximately 127 pairs are meeting. This increase is due in large part to better volunteer recruitment and a streamlined intake process.
- With a grant from Canada Summer Jobs and support from the Friends of the Library, students were hired to provide one-on-one reading help once/week to children ages 7 to 12 with reading difficulties in ‘**Summer R.E.A.D.**’ Students were placed in 15 locations; 299 children received this support. These students also participated in community events to provide literacy-based activities to children.
- One new way we encouraged children to read and to enjoy the experience was to introduce **Dog Tales** to our suite of offerings. In this program, children read to a four-legged volunteer – a therapy dog! Specially trained, these dogs are a great motivator to children and are loving and non-judgmental.
- For the second year, an initiative called **Read Away Your Fines** was held for teens during National Youth Week (May 1-7). We wanted to give them a chance to ‘start fresh’ and to rediscover the Library in order to access the many services and resources available to them. For every 15 minutes of reading in the library, \$1.00 was earned and credited to their fines. For an additional four weeks in May and June, the initiative was

expanded to all children and youth. In total, there were 254 participants and \$1017.25 in fines were 'read away'. Both of these numbers are about double those for 2008.

- **Get Caught Reading**, a reading incentive contest for teens over the summer months, resulted in 123 teens reading 704,710 pages in just 8 weeks!
- Many other **programs for teens** were offered across the system including book clubs, creative writing, movies and music. The Library is also a key player in the planning and delivery of National Youth Week. Of particular note is the continuing and growing popularity and influence of **LOUD**, a program where local teen bands play in the Library. These are held both at the Central Library and several branches and have become very well known across the city as one of the few places where teens can perform. As a result, the waiting list is long! Over the past year, we have had many letters and emails from parents of band members thanking us for this unique and valuable opportunity for their aspiring musicians.
- One special project of note this year was to reach out to both **elementary and secondary schools** in a system-wide and systematic manner to invite them to discover and explore both the Library's physical and virtual spaces. Promotional flyers which highlight the various types of class visits that we offer were produced and sent to all teachers in London along with an invitation to visit. Streamlined procedures to facilitate these visits were developed and related areas of the website redesigned and enhanced to be easier to use and more relevant. Special attention was also given to English assignments at the secondary school level; a comprehensive brochure was developed and PowerPoint presentations and worksheets created for teachers and library staff to use with English students. Packages were sent to all schools early in October and we have noticed an increase in the level of interest by teachers and the number of class visits booked.
- Many changes were made to the **Kids and Teen sections of the website** based on best practices and feedback from user groups. Work focused on both Homework Help and I Like to Read sections of these areas of the website. The content of these sections is created and maintained by the members of the Children's and Youth Services Committee.
- The Library continues to be very involved and deeply committed to the city-wide **Child and Youth Network** along with over 130 other organizations and agencies dedicated to the Vision: *Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow*. Library staff sit on each of the three priority Implementation Teams (Literacy, Healthy Eating/Healthy Physical Activity, and Ending Poverty); Julie Brandl chairs the Literacy Implementation Team. Its concrete action plan focuses on emergent literacy, family literacy, and a neighbourhood pilot project. Running through each of these is the fundamental belief that by a collaboration between home, school and community, we can make literacy a way of life for children, youth and their families. Many exciting things have developed from this work including Baby's Book Bag; Literacy Right From the Start and a locally-produced music CD for babies. In addition, the Library continues to ensure that our programs, services and resources support, and are aligned with, the goals of the Network. Together we are working to make London the best place to live and raise a family and to give our children and youth the opportunities and support they need to reach their potential in school and in life.