



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING DATE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Service Excellence - 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 this report be received by the Library Board.

Issue / Opportunity

The past year at LPL was another busy and successful one for Children's and Youth Services as we continued to offer a wide range of programs, services and resources to achieve our strategic goal to "promote and nurture life-long literacy and learning for children and youth". Community engagement and outreach were key and essential components to the work done this year.

Background & Review

Children's Services:

- We hosted the 1st annual **Community Celebration of Family Literacy Day** in January (in conjunction with National Family Literacy Day). We invited community agencies from around the city to partner with the Library to create a city-wide celebration. This was extremely successful and drew 22 community partners and approximately 200 children and their families to the 4-hour event with interactive hands-on activities, an author reading, celebrity readers, comic book art workshop, displays, spot prizes, cookie decorating, face painting and pizza sales. Another is planned for January 2009.
 - The theme of this year's **TD Summer Reading Club** was *LOL: Laugh Out Loud*. As we have done for the last several years, we built our program around this nation-wide theme adding many elements designed to foster a love of reading, to encourage children of all ages to read and use the library throughout the summer, to act as a reading bridge between school years, to be flexible enough to be tailored to meet the needs of individual locations, and to be fun. We had 5371 children register for the program with 19057 books read and 8113 book reports written. Staff at all locations visited their local schools in May and June to promote the program and talked to 11415 kids! One comment from a parent summed up the experience well:
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"One word – wonderful – would describe what I think about the Summer Reading Club. We have four children in our family and every single one benefits from the club. Our oldest is 16 and our youngest is 4; no problem keeping them reading with your help. Thank you."

- Continued emphasis was placed on **outreach** to community organizations to make the TD Summer Reading Club accessible to children who might otherwise not be able to participate. Four branches - Beacock, Carson, Jalna, and Pond Mills, with support from our two Literacy Facilitators - were involved in initiatives to provide children in high-needs neighbourhoods with the opportunity to take part in the program at off-site locations. These included: Boullee Housing Complex, City of London Playground Camp at Bishop Townshend P.S., Westminster Youth Engaging in Society, Southdale Chaplaincy, and London and Middlesex Housing complexes. In addition, the LIBRO Library Road Show vehicle allowed the Library to enhance and expand the Library's Summer Reading Club outreach, with 538 children reached. Attendance totaled 1,040 at all outreach sessions and response to these initiatives was extremely positive.
- 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; 226 children received this support. In addition, these students facilitated a summer '**Book Buddies**' program to meet the literacy needs of children ages 5 to 11 who simply needed to practice reading. Volunteers were used for this relaxed and inviting program.
- Also with support from the Friends of The Library, our school year **R.E.A.D.** (Reading Enjoyment and Development) Program was expanded in the fall. For a number of years we have offered R.E.A.D. at Crouch, Jalna, Sherwood and East London; with this additional funding, we are now offering it at 3 additional locations: Pond Mills, Beacock, and the Children's Library. Volunteers provide the one-on-one assistance; Literacy Facilitators run the program, match children with volunteers, and oversee all pairs.

Youth Services:

- We continued to offer new and innovative **programs and services** to teens based on the excellent work begun by the Youth Services Project Team in 2006-7. L.O.U.D. concerts, Battle of the Bands, gaming contests, book clubs, art workshops, and movie nights represent a sampling of the year's offerings. Many of the programs were co-sponsored with other agencies such as Hope's Garden and The New Mentality, so that issues of mental health and self-esteem could be addressed. We also have begun working with the TVDSB for students at risk by partnering with them in the U-Turn and Re-Connect programs, designed to reduce the high school drop-out rate. All locations now offer teen programming as a regular part of their offerings and have a Teen Annex space that teens can call their own. We continue to monitor tech trends and are continually adding to and enhancing our website to keep it fresh and relevant to teens; our virtual presence in their lives is essential to our continued success. We also continue to seek feedback and advice from teens through Teen Advisory Committees at Central and several branch libraries.
 - For the second year, we offered a teen summer reading incentive challenge called the **Teen Extreme Reading Machine**. Teens were challenged to read as many pages as they could during July and August. This year 229 teens signed up and together they read 678,807 pages! These figures are up 7 and 14% respectively over last year. A system-wide wrap-up party was held at the end of the challenge to celebrate this achievement.
 - Many teens are reluctant or unable to use the Library because they have fines on their cards. We wanted to give them a chance to 'start fresh' and to rediscover the Library so we held a program called **Read Away Your Fines** during National Youth Week (May 1-7). For every 15 minutes teens read in the library, they earned \$1 to be charged against their fines. In total 37 teens took us up on the offer and \$206 in fines were
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'paid off'. This was a wonderful way to actively demonstrate to teens that we want them to be able to access our services and resources. Based on the success of the Teen Read Away Your Fines program in May, we extended it to children of all ages for one month prior to registration of the TD Summer Reading Club. During the four weeks, 93 children participated and \$344 in fines were 'paid off'.

Child and Youth Network:

- The Library is proud and pleased to be an active member of the city-wide Child and Youth Network.
 - The Network is comprised of over **100 agencies and organizations** which work with children, youth and their families across the city. Since the spring of 2007, we have come together to determine how we can 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.
 - Together we developed London's Vision: *Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow.*
 - Working collaboratively, the Network has developed an **Agenda** which is an ambitious, long term plan designed to help London achieve its vision. It has also set out priorities, goals and strategies for the next 3 years and will work in partnership with families, governments, other organizations and the private sector to tackle critical issues.
 - **Concrete action plans** have been developed by members of the Network around its 4 priorities: ending poverty, increasing healthy eating and healthy physical activity, making literacy a way of life, and creating a family-centred service system.
 - Raising awareness and engaging the community are key strategies in all four priorities. The more people understand about how poverty, lack of literacy and physical inactivity affect children's health and well-being, the more likely they are to help solve these problems. And the more they know about the services available in our community, the more likely they are to use them.
 - The Agenda, comprised of these specific action plans, has been fully endorsed by members of the Network; each is committed to working collaboratively to make the Agenda a reality. We are determined to work and think differently to achieve the goals and will oversee the entire Agenda.
 - The **Literacy Action Plan**, developed by a sub-group of the Network comprised of experts in the field of literacy and representing key stakeholders, and co-chaired by Julie Brandl, has 4 main strategies: to promote literacy to the whole community; to take a neighbourhood approach to literacy; to promote literacy from birth; and to improve family literacy.
 - This plan is based on collaboration between home, school and the community. Each plays a key role in the lives of our children, youth and families and by working together on implementation of the plan, measurable and lasting improvements to literacy will be achieved.
 - The improvement to literacy in London will mean that more children will be ready to learn when they begin school, they will have greater success in school, they will be afforded more opportunities upon graduation from secondary school, they will be more productive members of our workforce and they will be able to reach their full potential. There are tremendous benefits to having a more literate population including a stronger and more viable knowledge-based economy, more productive workforce, happier and healthier people, and a stronger and more cohesive community. The benefits are life-long!
 - Through work on the Network, the Library is being seen as a major contributor and key stakeholder in this very exciting collaborative initiative. We look forward to being an active participant in the implementation of the Agenda. We will also ensure that Library programs, services and resources support, and are aligned with, the goals of the Network to provide the best for our children, youth and families.
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