

# Memorandum

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Jane Light

**SUBJECT:** LIBRARY FAMILY LITERACY  
PROGRAMS FUNDED BY GRANTS

**DATE:** March 21, 2008

Approved

Date

3-26-08

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide  
**SNI AREA:**

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee accept the report of the update on the Library's family literacy programs funded by grants.

## OUTCOME

The Committee will understand the activities, accomplishments, and plans for the Library family literacy programs.

## BACKGROUND

The San José Public Library is a leader in providing literacy services to adults and families in the San José area. This objective is accomplished through three primary areas of service: Partners in Reading (PAR) for adult literacy, Early Care for early literacy ages 0-5, and the Family Learning Centers (FLC). The FLCs are strategically located at library branches in communities where there is low-literacy, high immigration, and lower educational levels.

Partners in Reading (PAR) was created in 1989 to train volunteers to tutor adults whose reading and writing skills fall below the ninth grade level. This program is supported by the General Fund as well as funding through California State Library Literacy Services (CLLS) and other grants. The program has reached out to and provided tutoring services to over 1,000 adults and their families.

In 2001, the Family Literacy program was added under the Partners in Reading service umbrella after additional funding was made available through CLLS. The purpose of the program is to support state-wide family literacy initiatives for public libraries already providing adult literacy services in order to extend those services to include the families of adult learners with preschool age children.

The Early Care Unit supports the vision that all children will enter school ready to learn with the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive foundations necessary to ensure success in the classroom, and to develop to their full potential as lifelong learners. To accomplish this vision they target parents and early care providers by conducting workshops, educational materials, and outreach to family childcare homes, branch libraries and preschools. This unit is supported by Healthy Neighborhoods Venture Fund (HNVF), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other grants as well as the General Fund.

The Library identified a need for more intensive services, including English as a Second Language (ESL), adult basic education and citizenship preparation classes in certain areas of San José. Six branch libraries will have a designated area called a Family Learning Center (FLC) that would address these needs once the bond building program is complete. The space includes an FLC classroom, as well as dedicated computers and collections. Programs that are offered reflect the needs of the particular community, based on census tract demographics and school information. Dedicated staff is assigned to the FLCs to ensure support for the programs. Three FLCs are in operation today, including Hillview, Dr. Cruz Alum Rock, and Tully.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **ADULT LITERACY NEEDS**

The Partners in Reading (PAR) program targets adults reading or writing below the ninth grade level. One in five adults in San José falls into this category. In our program, more than half of the participants are non-native speakers of English and nearly half are native English speakers. We currently serve about 160 adults and their families. Learners who attend our program set their own goals, such as helping their child read, filling out a job application, or reading medical information including prescription labels. Funding for this program comes from a combination of the General Fund, California Library Literacy Services (CLLS), private donations, and other grants.

Through continuing outreach efforts in the library branches and the community, we recruit adult learners and volunteer tutors to work together one on one and in small groups. We also provide several life skills learning opportunities through workshops and book clubs. In addition, we offer the use of a computer lab with appropriate educational software designed for users with low literacy skills.

We recently began a group tutoring project for 12 teacher assistants at Parkway Child Development Center, sponsored by the Santa Clara County Office of Education. The tutoring is designed to help the teacher assistants gain skills necessary to successfully attend professional development courses at the community college level to advance in their jobs.

## **FAMILIES FOR LITERACY**

The PAR program has a family literacy component called Families for Literacy (FFL), designed for learners in our program who have children at home under the age of five. The goal of PAR/Families for Literacy (FFL) is to stop the cycle of intergenerational low literacy by reaching the child through teaching the parent/caregiver. Adults are encouraged to share books and read together as part of daily family life. PAR/FFL learner families are invited to monthly literacy events emphasizing parent/child time together, sharing meals and educational toys and games, followed by thematic story times, parent workshops, children's hands-on activities and the distribution of new books for all children present. To date, there have been 250 programs serving 962 families and 2,004 children. A total of 5,162 books have been distributed and 129 library cards issued.

In 2006, the San Jose Public Library launched the award winning Prime Time Family Reading Time program developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) as a powerful humanities based reading program. This project was made possible through a Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) grant in addition to Friends of the Library donations and the General Fund.

Prime Time Family Reading Time will begin its third season at the San José Public Library (SJPL) in April. This six-week session will engage parents/caregivers and their children, ages 6-10 in open-ended dialogue on children's literature from around the world. Twenty families will participate, gathered from PAR learners, SJPL Family Learning Centers and select families from Horace Mann, St. Patrick's and Lowell Elementary Schools. Preschool children will be involved in their own activities in an adjoining room. A storyteller and a San José State University professor will present the program.

## **ONE-TIME GRANTS FOR LITERACY**

In FY 2006/2007, we applied for and received a \$25,000 LSTA grant for the Early Learning with Families (ELF) Initiative to expand the library's Story Stay and Play programs. The overall objective of the ELF grant is to position libraries as community learning centers that offer families and their young children stimulating opportunities for play and early learning. After story times, the grant provided for a toy box full of developmentally appropriate toys for young children. While the children are playing, parents can talk with trained librarians about developmental assets for child development. The grant included materials for 11 branches, as well as materials for outreach to 20 Smart Start San Jose preschool sites, where we can provide families with their initial contact with the library through a familiar setting. A program is given at a preschool, and parents are invited to visit a branch library with their child. When they come to the branch, they receive a library card, an incentive, and are introduced to programs available to them. The Library felt this program was so important that we worked with our Friends of the Library to augment funding to develop this in all of our branches within this Fiscal Year.

Finally, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Business Objects Foundation and a \$3,000 grant from Target to pilot a Family Literacy Kit prepared specifically for parents to use with their children at home. The kits are available for checkout by families using one of the three current Family Learning Centers. The kits have materials that focus on core curriculum subjects such as literacy, language, math and science for ages 2 to 8 years of age with one kit focused on the

language development of babies and toddlers. These kits are bilingual Spanish/English or Vietnamese/English to reflect the languages representative of the surrounding community. This pilot project provided ten different kits for each of the three Family Learning Centers.

The goal of this pilot was to have 100 checkouts by the end of the seven-month pilot along with positive feedback by both customers and staff. At the end of the fourth month of the project there have been 156 checkouts so far and the customer evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive. One parent wrote *"I use this bag to read bedtime stories to my son every night."* Another wrote, *"This bag helps us to come together and have fun as a family."*

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

This is an annual update provided to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST** - This is not applicable.

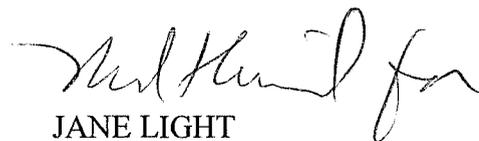
- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

### **COORDINATION**

This is not applicable.

### **CEQA**

This is not a project.



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