

WELLS PUBLIC LIBRARY
Minutes from “Maine Reads!” Grant Advisory Panel Meeting #1
March 8, 2005
Litchfields Restaurant, Wells, Maine

Present

Lorraine Canterbury, WPL Director
Leslie Rounds WPL Asst. Dir. /Youth Services Librarian
Lynn Mercier, Wells Jr. High School Media Specialist
Jennifer Frazier, Program Coordinator, Wells Activity Center (employee of the Wells Recreation Department)
Cheryl Mills, Director, Wells-Ogunquit Adult Community Education
Amber Tatnall, Director of Library and Learning Resources at York County Community College
Norman Wilkinson, President of the Friends of the Wells Public Library, and member of several community Boards of Directors

Summary

Library Director and Asst. Director contacted representatives from different groups in the community requesting their participation in the advisory panel. Eight of us (see above) met for lunch at an area restaurant with Leslie Rounds being the primary facilitator and Lorraine Canterbury the primary note taker. (Cheryl Mills had a prior engagement that caused her to arrive late so that her input is stated in the latter part of these minutes.)

Our discussion included identifying:

1. Literacy programs/activities currently taking place in the community
2. Underserved segments of the community
3. Overlaps in service or groups served
4. Potential community partners and projects to reach the underserved

I. Introductions/Grant Overview/Meeting Purpose

Introductions were made as each participant around the table told their name and position. Leslie handed each participant a folder containing information about the grant. As everyone present had previously received a letter about the grant and had spoken with Leslie, and in the interest of time, she gave a brief overview of the planning grant concept, structure, and requirements. She reminded the participants that our main purpose was to think of what groups are receiving literacy services and which groups are receiving none, then to decide which group(s) needs the services the most, and potential ideas for meeting the needs.

II. Participant Input on Literacy programs/activities currently taking place in community

JENNIFER:

The Recreation Dept. slowed down on after school teen programming (for junior high students) at the activity center. Last year only 5 children attended. Even when they hired a bus to transport students from the junior high to the center only 5 or less students

arrived. Both the “hang out” and the “structured program” yielded the same low attendance and currently there is no after school programming.

ALL: discussed possible reasons for the above including that students are home watching TV, using Internet and playing video games more. (This discussion resumed later on in the meeting.)

High schoolers are incredibly busy so this population is one we deemed not as likely to be benefited from this grant. They do not use public or school libraries, probably because activities occupy their time including jobs, marching band, sports, leagues (York Sports Center) – a lot of sports can go on all year long, Boy and Girl Scout Eagle/top badges.

JENNIFER: What is popular are the cooking classes for grades 3-6, the **theatre** classes for preschool to grade 6, and the preschool group for 3-5 year olds. This is held Mon. and Wed. morning and offers structured program with games, stories, arts and crafts. (Theatre and preschool program held at activity center.) Sports are popular, and “Mad Science” for 1st through 4th graders. This is held at elementary school.

LESLIE: Library offers baby, toddler, and preschool programs. (Our 3-5 yr. old program is held Wed. @ 1:00. Overlap in serving this population on the same day noted.) Library also offers evening preschool programs for working parents, school vacation programs for elementary school and junior high students. Summer Reading Program for ages 3-14, toddler programs are especially popular.

LORRAINE: Recalling when I was children’s librarian I commented that the spring magician programs are popular and discussed tie-in with literacy re: book displays, performers mentioned they learned magic in library, checking out other books while there etc.

Also that when I gave out surveys asking junior high students to give input on services and materials and programs they would like, many mentioned **reader’s theatre** and putting on **plays**. Many junior high students come to the library after school since we are right next door and await pick up from working parents, often not until 5 or 6:00 closing. For many of these students it is hard to engage them constructively, despite the inviting young adult area and collection: graphic novels, browsing books, quality fiction and interesting popular non-fiction, magazines etc. We are short staffed and have not had the personnel, funds, or time for after school library programming that we feel would benefit many of these students. Ideas have been explored, special “Teen Read Week” programs were successful, last June a first meeting w. Lynn at junior high of “young adult advisory board” was promising, but not continued due to financial and time constraints.

Adult programs on a variety of formats and topics are offered on a monthly basis, in addition to monthly art gallery openings. Adult Book Discussion program will commence in April.

LYNN: Junior high does a Thanksgiving dinner w. the senior citizens – each student is paired off with a senior. [ALL discussed desirability of multigenerational programming.]

Junior high has added literacy teachers. Efforts to catch the remedial readers with in school enrichment to help the lower readers - “No Child Left Behind” law. Because of the new bus schedule and the fact that students after school activities are being cut to just 20 minutes long before a student has to have their bus passed signed and get on the bus, many students are no longer participating in after school activities. Many going to library next door awaiting ride from parents.

AMBER: Collaborated with the Maine State Library in hosting the “Cream of the Crop” Collection and invited all school librarians and teachers to come to see it. The students in York County Community College’s Early Childhood Education/Development program did all kinds of things with the collection as part of their curriculum.

She had a grant for adult literacy and bought paperbacks for lower readers for reading for pleasure. A Literacy Festival is planned for April: “Read @ YCCC”. There will be posters depicting pictures of local celebrities with their favorite books. Many of her students are adults and are returning to or beginning college after being out in the work force. She includes in her collection light, accessible best sellers (“pulp”) and graphic novels. She will have a “read-aloud” time – perhaps someone reading from Sherlock Holmes around 4 – 7:00 p.m.

NORMAN: Friends of the Library sponsor most of the children’s and is now beginning to sponsor most of the adult programs in the library. Ones especially related to literacy include the annual Poetry Night, and his “Reader’s Comedy Theatre” group that he started for the Ogunquit Performing Arts and Dunaway Center in Ogunquit.

III. Identifying Overlaps/Underserved Segments of the Community

Regrouped and discussed goal we had in mind was to motivate a target population and improve literacy. We discussed meaning of literacy and that Cheryl Mills of Adult Education will offer more information related to concept of literacy when she arrives. We discussed overlaps in service to the preschool population. Our community has a high percentage of retirees and seniors but that their literacy needs, to the extent that they have them, are being met by Adult Education and Senior Center. Also area library’s (including Ogunquit and Kennebunk) have book discussion groups and our library is starting one. Adult literacy needs are being met by Adult Education.

We agreed that, at this point, the junior high age group (approximately age 10-14) was the underserved segment of the population of the community that we were thinking of serving with this grant.

LYNN: Expanded on the bus situation at the junior high (next door) saying that although activities are offered everyday, the time of the activity is very short and the students are rushed to get their passes signed and on the bus so they don’t go to the activities as much and the numbers of student participants have gone down. Lynn said that some activities are literacy based including the “graphic novelist” and newspaper clubs.

LYNN and AMBER (Amber has junior high aged children) – now kids are going home to TV, Internet, chat room w. friends, playing games online, also doing html and doing reading as they are doing some of the above.

ALL: We need to rethink what literacy is. CD games, Internet and other computer activities encompass computer literacy that is necessary for youth in today's (and tomorrow's) world.

LYNN: New media center/library coming as part of expansion – completion date due in April. New Principal wants it used after school. There is an elaborate puppet theatre in library, as well as a collection of attractive puppets. The junior high has a very well stocked computer center. Our grant project(s) could tap into both of these.

Question: Where do the kids in Wells hang out? No real gathering place(s). No real town center. In summer area (especially Rte. 1) is crowded with tourists – some may go to local ice cream place. Most go home and to the public library.

10-14 year olds cannot drive yet, which is another factor in our being in a better position to reach this population.

AMBER: YCC student senate is active and into community service but many of the students are parents of these middle school kids and very busy themselves (working, taking classes etc.) 29% of YCCC is adults/returning students.

ALL: Mentoring may still be a junior high group of students as a “Junior Friends of the Library” group being mentored by and assisting the adult “Friends of the Wells Public Library.”

Diana Abbott (Vice-Chair of Friends of WPL) wants to come in to both junior high and public library to read.

Both YCCC and Activity Center have SPACE available for grant projects/programs and are very interested in having it used!

IDEAS: Junior high kids to read to younger kids, puppet theatre group to develop show to present to preschoolers.

CHERYL: (When Cheryl arrived she spoke of the following :) Adult education addresses literacy for both adults and their children.

Cheryl spoke of literacy as:

Education related to those skills that are necessary to be included in today's world. This includes: numeracy (math), civic literacy, technological literacy, language literacy, communication literacy, as well as other skills. Now we are looking at what are the skills needed to be successful. The definition of literacy is very broad in terms of the skills.

NORMAN: Spoke of the need for students to be able to stand up and speak before a group and be able to keep it within a few minutes– communication literacy.

LYNN: said that a strength of the junior high is that 6th graders are expected to do an oral and written presentation and there are also separate classes on public speaking.

CHERYL: continued telling us about the literacy services by Adult Education. She said they provide learning opportunities for non-readers up through preparing for college. They provide a family literacy program for parents and children and also program(s) for these 2 populations together. There is a birth through age 5 “Parents as Teachers” intervention program with a limited budget so there is a small waiting list. That group also does a playgroup for families that is held at the elementary school. The family literacy grant in the past (including preschool structured programs?) was not popular.

CHERYL: asked about the purpose of the programming and what is the need we are trying to address.

We spoke of reaching 10-14 year old low readers and also those who were low in ability in other literacy skills including technology and civic literacy.

CHERYL: spoke of “aspirations” and how the high school does a lot of work focused on raising the aspirations of kids. She said the high school guidance department starts working on this with freshmen.

LORRAINE: emphasizing the points of improved motivation level and self-image as desirable side-benefits/goals of our projects for the population of “tweens” who frequent our library, Lorraine cited a study. The study pointed to “developmental assets” that youth needed to become successful adults and how our grant project(s) could relate to the strengthening of some of these assets. Lorraine will follow-up with more info related to this study. [*See last section of these minutes.]

IV. Project IDEAS:

We did not spend much time identifying potential community partners other than each of those represented at the meeting and those referred to in our ideas, (i.e. all schools, artists from library gallery and elsewhere etc.) WPL currently collaborates with all those represented at meeting (although does so with YCCC to a lesser extent) and also with Senior Center and other community partners. (Some of these collaborations have just begun since Lorraine became director in October '04 and we hope to strengthen some and start new ones in connection with this grant.)

This – identifying community partners - is something we can spend more time doing at next meeting.

“The big problem is keeping up with the enthusiasm so they *keep* coming.”

Ideas for programs/projects that might appeal to this age and inspire them towards greater literacy/improve literacy include:

scavenger hunt theme, theatre, local artists giving art classes, gardening projects, game clubs, craft programs, book/CD reviewing, movie/book discussion

programs/series, young adult advisory board, cartooning including digital (Amber said that the college has digital media programming computers with digital media software that we could use. Lynn reminded us of the new junior high technology center.)

CHERYL: Said that theatre is a good way for that age group to enter into public speaking.

LYNN: In the school plays, technical crews are large and very popular. The enthusiasm is huge for the use/involvement of these technical skills. – [how to build upon/apply this in relation to the grant.]

V. Wrap up/Follow up assignments

Public Forum meeting – Wednesday, March 23 @ 7:00 p.m.

Leslie will make a flyer to put in our library and school libraries and post around town to advertise forum. Cheryl said to send her the master and she will send it to all k-8 kids. If we just write on the master “co-sponsored by Adult Education” no need to get superintendent approval.

Cheryl offered to be the facilitator or scribe (on large easel pad) at this meeting. Leslie may facilitate meeting and Lorraine again be secretary, but definite roles to be decided.

Final meeting – Thursday, April 5, noon @ Litchfield’s Restaurant

Cheryl will e-mail Leslie and Lorraine the definition she uses at Adult Education for literacy.

*Notes recorded by Lorraine Canterbury, Director, Wells Public Library,
who greatly apologizes for any inadvertent misrepresentations that may have occurred
in my note taking! March 20, 2005*

The following was not part of the March 8th meeting, but rather is follow-up information that was received after the meeting.

1. Following is what Cheryl e-mailed to Lorraine (thank you Cheryl for your efforts!)

Regarding the definition of literacy:

I looked up some definitions on the internet and I think this one comes pretty close. An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society. superpages.literacydirectory.org/docs/glossary.asp
This of course is a definition for adult literacy.

Possessing the communication, numeracy, problem-solving and technology skills necessary to be successful in society.

2. Lorraine's follow-up re: developmental assets resulted in:

Lorraine called junior high school guidance counselor (Marilyn Burke Powers) inquiring about the concept or any related information counselor who could point me to or provide me with. She will try to locate some relevant articles or research for us. Meanwhile, Lorraine found the source of the information she/I referred to during the meeting:

In his article "Why We Are Kids Best Assets" in School Library Journal, Nov. 2001, young adult library specialist Patrick Jones wrote about the research of the Search Institute of Minneapolis. The research listed "40 Developmental Assets, a series of social bonds, community resources, and activities that young people need to inculcate in order to become responsible, successful, caring adults. They are the foundation kids need in order to survive." (p.44)

(The Maine Reads grant can include projects and collaborations that foster the literacy-related important developmental assets for students aged 10-14 years old.)