

# Cambridge Free District Library Creates Teen Area Thanks to Wal-Mart Grant

The **Cambridge Free District Library** saw a need to expand offerings to the teens in their community. The district library serves almost 2000 people in Northern Washington County, though the town of Cambridge has a population of about 300. Tweens and teens account for about 100 of the town's residents and the library was the only place where they could gather, socialize, and collaborate after school.



The library had formed a teen reading club that met bi-monthly and had a good basic collection of mostly hardcover books for teens to checkout. Upon receiving the \$4,000 grant from Wal-Mart the library went to work fulfilling their mission of enhancing available teen services and creating a special space just for them.

Teens and staff worked together to transform a small space in the library with posters and colorful kites. They added a couch, a table and stools, and a paperback turnaround to complete the makeover. Poster frames holding pictures of teens with their favorite books helped add even more color and interest to the area.

The most important component of their project was to create a new paperback collection that circulated to all young people regardless of membership, overdue fines, or other problems at the library. The policies would be more open ended with unlimited checkout available. Another important feature was to use teen input in choosing the titles for the paperback collection. The library used the existing teen reading club members as their advisors for the project. The team coordinators met with the teens once a month throughout the year. They helped design the space, choose titles for the collection, and develop programs of interest to teens. Teens were also encouraged to donate gently used paperbacks to help build the collection and share their favorite books with peers.

The library reports that they have seen this year's circulation of hardcover and paperback books double for the targeted age group. Teens are regularly using the space independently as well as for scheduled meetings. In order to keep the space vibrant and relevant for teens, the library plans to continue to add new titles to the paperback collections as well as their cataloged Young Adult collection. They intend to continue with the teen meetings and get ongoing feedback from them regarding library services, collection development, and programs.

