

Lewiston City Library Creates New Teen Center Thanks to Wal-Mart Grant

The **Lewiston City Library** recognized the need for a designated Teen Center in their library to better serve the young adults in their community. Almost 25 percent of the population in Lewiston is 12 to 19 years of age, yet there were limited community programs and no special area in the library they could call their own. The library also recognized that teens have different learning styles and interests which could be specifically targeted with the addition of the Teen Center. They felt strongly that the creation of the center would demonstrate that adults care about and respect their needs and support their activities. Motivated by these important details, the library applied for the Wal-Mart Foundation's "Strengthening Library Services for Youth in Idaho" grant.



As one of 14 projects funded, they were able to fulfill their vision and design a new section of the library just for teens with the \$10,000 grant. In preparation for the changes, they held a groundbreaking ceremony on April 29, 2009. First Lady Lori Otter, Wal-Mart Manager Brian Mansfield, and Confluence Press Publisher James Hepworth joined with local teens and parents to form a 'bucket brigade' in order to move books and kick off the renovation.

Phase One of their project was focused on creating the physical space and acquiring new furniture and technology. The new area was painted with bold blue, green, and orange; new café style tables and chairs were installed; and bookshelves were re-arranged to create an inviting teen space. Two new MAC laptops, digital cameras, an entertainment system including a retractable screen, projector and

DVD player were purchased. The project funded the purchase of a core collection of college prep materials to enhance the Teen Center even further.

Another component of the project was a teen publishing workshop called Express Yourself @ Your Library. In June 2009, nine teens attended the workshop led by publisher James Hepworth. The teens were charged with the task of writing their own books including completing the photography, editing, and publishing to create the finished product. Although some students struggled at times with the instructor's directions and the complexity of the project, each one met the challenge and completed their book by the end of the session. The full color,



hardbound books were displayed to the public and then the teens had the opportunity to take them home. The library plans to offer another workshop in the future to capitalize on the teen's success.



In the fall of 2009 Phase Two - Teen Gaming @ Your Library got under way with the purchase of a Nintendo Wii System and several games including *Guitar Hero*. The new Wii debuted at a Teen Game Night event and was a qualified hit. The library staff have seen a steady increase in use of the gaming system as teens talk it up among their peers.

The library conducted a survey asking teens several questions about their library use and received a total of 46

responses. Almost 40 percent said that they used the library weekly or more. The survey also showed that 50 percent reported using the MAC laptops for research – a surprisingly high percentage! Teens had a section on the survey where they could offer ideas on classes and events they would like to see hosted at the Teen Center. The library took these suggestions to heart and has already incorporated some of their ideas into the programming.

The library's main goals with this project were to increase programs for teens and increase teen attendance at the library. They appear to have met these goals with the creation of the Teen Center. They have seen a slow and steady rise in attendance by kids ages 12 to 19 since it opened. In addition to increased attendance by their "regulars" they have seen some new faces come through the door as well. They expect that this trend will be even more pronounced this summer. An added benefit has been the increased use of the teen center during the school day by their home-schooled population.

The library has taken several steps to ensure sustainability of the program. They are actively pursuing a video game collection and already offer several weekly and monthly teen programs. Ongoing programs using the space include; game night, scrapbooking, teen book club, T-shirt transformation, and teen poetry program. Plans to expand their offerings are already under way with a "Battle of the Bands" program planned for this summer. Teens are already practicing in preparation for the competition and the battle could be a fierce one. Another addition over the summer will be weekly movie nights. Overall the library feels the program is a success and of great benefit to Lewiston area teens.

