

## **LSTA Grant Project Peer Evaluation**

Project: Teen Advisory Panel & Library Awareness PSAs

Peer Evaluator: Anna H. Warns

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### **Evaluation Summary**

The Teen Advisory Panel and Library Awareness PSAs project conducted by the Rathdrum Branch Library of the Kootenai-Shoshone Area Libraries, in particular by current and then staff members Sandy Burnett and Mike Lee, was successful and valuable. The nature and vision of the project gave the teens involved the opportunity to succeed. The objectives of the project were met and the results were impressive. The products of the project were created through the hard work of the teens with the equipment purchased through the grant. They were high quality and went on to win an award. Many teens became actively involved with the library for the first time and the relationships they developed were priceless. Teens, new and not, built relationships with each other, with library staff and with the community. They gained confidence and skill as they went from consumers to creators – something Mike Bell called “important and intoxicating.” The benefit of the project extended beyond itself and beyond the library as teens became more involved in their community by volunteering in other projects.

### **Project Objectives**

The broad objective of this project was to get local teens actively involved at the Rathdrum Branch Library in a positive and interactive way. Promoting the Smithsonian Institution – Yesterday’s Tomorrows exhibit at the Hayden Branch Library through a series of public service announcements as well as promoting the library in general through a poster series were the specific projects planned in order to meet this goal.

## **Project Method**

Rathdrum Branch Library staff members Mike Lee and Sandy Burnett were deeply involved with the entire process from grant writing, to working directly with the teens, to setting up an unveiling/recognition ceremony. Director John Hartung was very supportive of the project and was involved in the grant writing process as well as handling administrative and other issues as they arose. Aside from dedicating time to accomplish the project and its objectives library staff were very conscious of how they approached teens in their community. Rather than a “come see what we have for you” approach, they used one of “we could really use your help” which set the tone for the entire project. The timeline was built into the project as they needed to advertise the exhibit before it took place.

## **Project Results**

The objectives of the project were not merely met; they were exceeded in many ways. At any one time there were upwards of 40 teens involved with the project; some regular library users but many who were new. Not only did new teens start getting involved with the library specifically because of this project, teens formed new bonds with each other that transcended typical cliques or groups, built positive connections with the community, learned leadership and self direction skills, became more confident with technology, learned about photography, and learned how to create and edit video.

The project produced posters with local celebrities created to promote the library (which are still hanging in the library and around town), PSAs to promote the Yesterday's Tomorrows exhibit from the Smithsonian, and PSAs created for the Humane Society. High quality and quite impressive, these projects are excellent examples of the project's success. The PSAs ran on 30

stations and on local cable. The PSAs created for Yesterday's Tomorrows were entered into the Silver Valley Film Festival in 2006 and won. On top of the pride and recognition, the library took home \$300. The great inroads created by the teens with the community were demonstrated by the attendance of teens, families, library staff, board members and community members at the unveiling party held to recognize the work of the teens and show off the product.

### **Project Impact**

The long-term effects of this project are best seen locally. The Rathdrum Branch Library staff shared many accounts of growth and development experienced by teens. Many of these are now in college and have taken their skills with them into the next stage in their life. The connections built between the community and the library have continued. Also, though most of the teens involved with this program have graduated and moved on, the knowledge gained by staff continues and is still at work in the library as they work with new teens.

When asked what role this type of project might play in Idaho's future Mike and Sandy thought it might be a good model for others trying to do a project of a similar nature. They felt that this project was a good mechanism for engaging the teen community and facilitating creativity and initiative.

Currently, the Kootenai-Shoshone Area Libraries plan to improve teen programs system wide and will be using PSAs, like the ones created for this project, to market them.

### **Project in Retrospect**

When asked to look back on the project and consider what worked or what didn't and what they would do differently or keep the same, Sandy and Mike said that everything worked out

very well. To be exact they said it was “magic”. Everything came together and was right. They had the resources they needed and they had enough time to get everything done. “It was the perfect test run” project.

Their advice for someone trying to do a similar project is provide food, be flexible, have 100% support from your administration and be aware that it’s a huge time commitment.

While the grant process was tedious and a great burden on the staff, they were very satisfied with the support given to them by ICFL. Anne Abrams was a great consultant. They felt that the flexibility they were given to work within the grant as the project grew was vital to its success.