

NEWS RELEASE

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Library Summer Reading Programs Critical to Curtailing Learning Loss

BOISE, Idaho – Having fun is a high priority for most kids during their time away from the classroom. But reading should also be top of mind for students, parents, and caregivers during the summer months.

More than 30 years of studies consistently show that students who do not continue reading over the summer can lose several months of academic progress.¹ For example, in Idaho, 77 percent of low-income kindergartners were reading at grade level in the spring of 2014. When they returned to school as first-graders in the fall, only 57 percent were reading at grade level.²

Public libraries throughout Idaho help curtail the “summer slide” of learning loss by offering reading and education programs within their buildings, as well as out in the community, through such partnerships as those with summer nutrition programs, parks and recreation departments, and community organizations. Library staff routinely go where the kids are, which is particularly important for low-income children who tend to have few books in the home and limited access to their local library.

In 2016, more than 52,000 Idaho children and teens participated in their library’s summer reading programs, and another 55,400 were served through library outreach programs.³

The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) provides books and resources to Idaho libraries through initiatives such as its Read to Me program, which is supported with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. In addition, through a Fred Meyer Stores grant to the ICfL, paperback books will be given to participants in this year’s Summer Reading programs. Also, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation makes free park admission passes available for libraries, which often use them as prizes for young readers.

Through its Summer Reading outreach programs, the ICfL provides free, easily accessible books and education programs at libraries and community locations throughout the Gem State.

Idaho State Librarian Ann Joslin said, “It is critical for youngsters to continue reading and learning in the summer to maintain the achievements they made during the school year. And to help ensure that more kids arrive at school in the fall on track to progress in their education, Idaho librarians continue to explore new ways to reach Idahoans where they are -- whether that is within the library’s four walls or at the neighborhood park.”

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This year, the ICfL will include science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities in its summer learning outreach to libraries, which is made possible by a \$30,000 grant from the Idaho STEM Action Center. STEM-related skills and knowledge are important to ensuring Idaho's long-term economic prosperity. Employers require the critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation that STEM helps to develop and foster.

The value of today's libraries continues to grow and deepen. In Idaho, use of the materials, programs, and resources found in the state's libraries have increased dramatically, particularly in the past five years. In fiscal year 2014, Idaho libraries had the 5th highest per capita circulation of children's materials and attendance at children's programs in the nation. Attendance at young adult programs ranked 7th per capita and has grown 139 percent over the past five years.³

Libraries have evolved from places known only for research, reading, and reflection, to becoming the community's bustling hub of innovation, education, and engagement.

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) builds the capacity of more than 850 public, school, academic, and special libraries to better serve their communities through statewide programming, continuing education, online resources, and building library community. To learn more about the ICfL, visit: <http://libraries.idaho.gov>.

Sources:

¹*Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Achievement Gap* by Richard L. Allington and Anne McGill-Franzen, 2013.

²State of Idaho Department of Education

³State of Idaho: 2015 Idaho Public Library Statistics