

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Idaho Libraries & Laundromats – Information Item

Idaho Libraries & Laundromats: 2022 Program Overview

Inspired by the work of the Laundry Cares Foundation, the Chicago Public Library, and the Clinton Foundation's *Too Small to Fail* initiative, ICfL began talking about creating our own version of this national literacy outreach program for Idaho in 2019. We reviewed the Chicago Study (see links below) which compared the impact of incorporating trained library staff in each laundromat literacy center and modeling adult-child interactions around early literacy activities with laundromats that did not have library staff involvement. We also attended Laundry Cares Foundation's *Laundromat Literacy Summit*, where we learned more about the national model and what aspects of the program might be different in rural Idaho. In fall of 2019, Staci Shaw and I reached out to the Idaho library community to identify interested library partners and purchased our first literacy centers (called "Family Read, Play, Learn Centers"). In spring 2020, we began with four pilot sites implemented by three public libraries: Gooding Public Library, Community Library Network @ Post Falls, and the Coeur d'Alene Public Library (with two sites). Today, we support 13 Idaho public libraries across the state as they partner with local laundromat owners to bring "Family Read, Play, Learn Centers" and outreach activities to everyday spaces in their communities.

This project aims to...

- Serve families/caregivers with young children, who are unable or unlikely to visit the library, with early literacy services.
- Support families/caregivers in their efforts to prepare their children for Kindergarten.
- Utilize laundromat wait times to offer early literacy resources to children and families.

Program Challenges:

- We launched the program in March of 2020 – need I say more! COVID delayed our roll-out and changed the program activities significantly. Most locations have yet to do a live storytime or any other in-person program activities at the centers due to COVID; this was a key element in Chicago to produce positive impact and we hope to incorporate this element as soon as it is safe.
- The biggest challenge for participating libraries is getting in contact with the laundromat owners – not the store managers, but the owners – to start the partnership process and gain buy-in. This seems to be a nationwide challenge.

Program Highlights:

- The Laundry Cares Foundation, along with their library consultant Liz McChesney (former Chicago Public Library Youth Services Director), reached out to offer us support and have been impressed with our efforts so far. They would like to partner with us in the future to pilot some of their literacy activity ideas and possibly visit and host a Free Laundry Day in Idaho.
- Our public libraries are excited for this new outreach opportunity and are eager to find ways to make it work in their communities and with their staffing situations.

Program Cost: Each medium-size “Family Read, Play, Learn Center” purchased from the Laundry Cares Foundation costs about \$2,600. We have also spent some funds on extended book subscriptions for the four pilot sites since their program implementation was stalled due to COVID, and on printing of the indoor Storywalk®. We have spent about \$35,000 total over two fiscal years.

Next Steps:

We’d like to use the rest of our budgeted FY22 funds to purchase four “Family Read, Play, Learn Centers” for non-laundromat sites. We have several libraries who have come to us to say they would like to participate but either do not have a laundromat in their town/nearby, or they think there is a need for a literacy center in a non-laundromat location in their community that is a better fit for the program goals. For example, Prairie River Library District in Lapwai does not have a laundromat in town but they think their local tribal health clinic, Nimiipuu Health, would be a good fit as it is a regular gathering place for many area families and children. Boise State University’s Albertsons Library would also like a literacy center in their library as they are building a program to better serve the needs of their non-traditional students, many of whom have children. Would it work to build a study room that included literacy activities and books for children to interact with while their parent studies nearby? What changes would need to be made for this to work in an academic library setting?

We have named the program “Idaho Libraries & Laundromats” with the anticipation that if the partner is not a laundromat, the title can be easily switched – i.e. “Idaho Libraries & Health Clinics.” Serving non-laundromat sites is also a national trend and the Laundry Cares Foundation has already developed a slightly different center that is geared towards placement in family court or WIC waiting rooms. We are also working on an evaluation plan for our current sites. Annually, we would like to continue to purchase 4-6 literacy centers to add on new library partners each fiscal year.

Important Links:

ICfL's Program Page: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/libraries-laundromats/>

Overview of the Chicago Study: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/Chicago-Laundry-Eval-Ph3.pdf>

LaundryCares' family court centers: <https://laundrycares.org/family-read-play-learn-space-kits/family-court-read-play-learn-space-kits/>

News coverage:

- Idaho News 6/Caldwell center - <https://www.kivitv.com/news/caldwell-library-partners-with-laundromat-to-promote-child-literacy>
- KSAW Magic Valley/Twin Falls center - <https://www.kivitv.com/ksaw/read-it-love-it-leave-it-twin-falls-library-encourages-child-literacy-in-laundromat>
- KREM 2/Coeur d'Alene & Hayden centers - <https://youtu.be/K57azvjK6pA>

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Map of ICfL's 13 ILL locations



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PARTICIPATING LIBRARIES
2022