Warm up to summer reading

Spring weather will soon lead to summer heat, so it is time to begin thinking about a summer reading program. The Illinois Library Association’s IREAD Program has selected “Reading Takes You Everywhere” as this summer’s theme. The graphics and programs will focus on the excitement of exploration and new discoveries that can be found in books, libraries, our communities and beyond. Visit its website at https://www.ireadprogram.org/ to view potential activities.

Summer reading programs can and should include both adults and their children. These programs help prevent learners from experiencing the “summer slide.” This is when learning loss occurs because of the lack of engagement in educational activities during the summer. Parents of children enrolled in summer reading programs have reported that the more time their children spent reading over the summer, the more prepared they were for school in the fall. They are also more confident readers. A summer reading club reminds children that reading is fun, as well as for learning.

Summer reading programming can include activities, graphics, crafts, reading lists, incentives and much more for children, teens and adults. You can develop your own themes and incentives to encourage summer reading or explore statewide or nationwide initiatives. Public libraries host annual summer reading programs. Literacy programs are encouraged to contact and work with their local library to coordinate activities or participate together in a program.

Public libraries — (Cont. from pg. 2)

different conversation groups for adults needing literacy services that allowed participants to practice English. In addition, a citizenship conversation group was implemented.

“Gale Borden Public Library District benefits from our close relationship with the YWCA and Elgin Community College,” Sabo shares. “Our activities and programs are aligned to help the residents of our community become strong citizens. The public library plays a vital role in making sure that everyone has a chance to succeed though education.”

Waukegan Public Library — “Literacy at Waukegan Public Library (WPL) has evolved from a small group of individuals into an organization with a mission and vision,” says Gale Grave, the education and literacy services manager at the library.

In 2015, the library adopted the mission of providing a path to empower and support learning and discovery. At the core of WPL’s resources, services and space are the ability and capacity to ... tutor for his or her selfless commitment toward improving the lives of Illinois citizens through literacy services.

Secretary White and the Illinois Literacy Foundation distribute books in celebration of Family Reading Night

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois Literacy Foundation (ILF) celebrated Family Reading Night (FRN) with a book giveaway at the Addison Public Library.

Each child and family in attendance at the library was gifted a free book courtesy of the ILF. Throughout the evening, participants enjoyed stories, snacks and crafts. Secretary White was joined by state Rep. Kathleen Willis, ILF President Mike Mroz, and Addison Public Library Director Mary Medjo-Me Zengue.

“During Family Reading Night we encourage families to turn off televisions, computers, phones, videogames and other electronic devices and spend time reading together,” White said. “Reading as a family creates a positive learning environment and helps children develop language skills, comprehension and a love for reading that can last a lifetime.”

This is the 26th year the Secretary of State’s office has sponsored FRN. For additional information about this annual event, please visit http://www.illinoistakeyourchildrenRead.com or contact Bonnie Matheis, coordinator of the Illinois Center for the Book, at bmatheis@ilsos.net.

To subscribe to Illinois Literacy, call 217-785-6921 or 800-665-5576 (Illinois only), #3.
Public libraries and the Secretary of State literacy effort

Public libraries throughout Illinois play an important role in educating adult learners and their families. Literacy programs rely on libraries for a full array of library services. Libraries may provide space for one-on-one adult volunteer tutoring or recruit and refer low-literate/English as a Second Language (ESL) adult learners, as well as volunteer literacy tutors. Additional services may include providing family literacy services, offering ESL conversation groups and low-reading level book discussion groups, maintaining high interest/low reading (hi-lo) level and bilingual collections, employing multilingual staff, or providing services and programming in multiple languages.

The following are examples of library and literacy program partnerships that have resulted in exemplary literacy projects. To determine how libraries and literacy programs can work in tandem to address the literacy needs of a community, please contact the Illinois State Library’s Literacy office at 217-785-6921.

Bridgeview Public Library – The Arab American Action Network (AAAN) has provided the Bridgeview community with much needed adult and family literacy opportunities since 2010. Bridgeview Public Library strives to be a regular destination for the families in the literacy program by ensuring a welcoming environment for the families to receive free materials and programs. The library offers tours and special programming, such as an annual heritage awareness events and weekly family events for children of all ages. Through the partnership with AAAN, the library houses Arabic-language materials for parents and children. Julie Soto, head of the library’s youth services, reports that “When a child hears the special melody of their parent’s familiar voice reading their native language, they not only build literacy skills, but also deepen the connection to their culture.”

The partnership has been mutually beneficial to all involved. Soto explains that “AAAN’s recommendation of library programs and materials to their clients has expanded our diverse patron base. The greatest contribution of our partnership is a better understanding of the cultural beliefs and values of the Arab community. The partnership is strong due to the dedication each organization has to improve the lives of families and children through literacy.”

Decatur Public Library – The library has actively and directly partnered with Richland Community College’s Project READ since 2003 when the literacy program’s office and primary tutoring sites were relocated to the library. Project READ’s library location allows staff to respond to the diverse and ever-changing needs of the adults and families in the literacy program. The library is convenient, accessible location for students and tutors.

Students and tutors have easy access to the library’s extensive print and audiovisual materials. In addition, the library donated hi-lo books to Project READ. Library staff helps students get library cards and works with students who have overdue fines to restore their active library user status.

Project READ benefits by utilizing rent-free space in the library for special meetings and trainings. Library staff refers potential students and tutors to the literacy program, and the Friends of Decatur Public Library supports the program through monetary grants. “The partnership between the library and Project READ is a win-win situation,” says Rick Meyer, city librarian. “The missions of the two entities dovetail nicely. The library will continue to value and support the work that Project READ does in our community for adult literacy.”

Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin – In 1884, the Gail Borden Public Library District became the official sponsoring agency for the local chapter of the Literacy Volunteers of America, Incorporated (LVA). A space in the basement was provided to house the chapter’s office. At the time, the city of Elgin was experiencing a large influx of Hispanic and Asian newcomers to the community. These populations were in need of literacy services, such as ESL tutoring and Adult Basic Education (ABE). The partnership with LVA allowed the library to leverage its services in order to respond to a need in the community. More than 33 years later, LVA has evolved into the Literacy Connection. The organization remains headquartered at the library, but operates independently of the library. Its model of one-on-one training produces highly literate students.

“Economic downturns have the ability to make organizations and individuals rethink everything they are doing,” states Sara Sabo, the library’s deputy director. “That is exactly what we did. While we continue to support the Literacy Connection, we realized that there were ways that we could augment and supplement them.”

Elgin has a large Hispanic population with a significant number of residents still lacking sufficient skills in English to succeed. In order to alleviate the strain of a lengthy waiting list at the Literacy Connection for services, the library began to offer

FRN activities at literacy programs and libraries

YWCA of Elgin – The Penny Severns Family Literacy program held a morning “reading night” to accommodate families with toddlers as well as those who were planning on attending reading night activities held that evening at local schools and the library. The day began with a parenting session using wordless picture books followed by reading practice with children at different developmental levels and ages. Blankets were laid out in the gymnasium and parents read with and to their children.

Mt. Morris Public Library – FRN was highlighted with the new collection of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) materials at the library. Participants were able to learn and play with these new items. Families were joined by local celebrity readers, including a local television meteorologist, an elementary school assistant principal and the library board president. The evening concluded with participants creating tree decorations for the Library Bandshell Christmas tree.

Chinese Mutual Aid Association – This organization, located in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood, hosted an interactive storyteller who told various stories, including about a boy who feared eating the chicken “feet” soup at his grandmother’s house. He also taught the children how to juggle balls and scarves. Following the performance, participants were treated with snacks, and each one given an age-appropriate book to take home.

Philo Public Library District – The library invited local children to a reading and pajama party for FRN. Kids wore their pajamas and brought their favorite bedtime buddy to listen to special guests who read bedtime stories. They were also entertained by a local speech group after which they enjoyed a bedtime snack before leaving the event.

Asian Human Services – This organization, located in Chicago’s West Ridge neighborhood, invited sixth grade children to read their favorite stories to younger children and parents. Families rotated through storytelling stations and also participated in a craft making project. Their choices included making puppets or creating a keychain or jewelry.

Celebrate Service

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

April 15-21

Last year, more than 3,000 Illinois residents answered the call to help adults in our state who have difficulties in basic reading, math, writing or language skills. It is our privilege to honor and celebrate those volunteer tutors during National Volunteer Week from April 15-21, 2018.

National Volunteer Week allows organizations the opportunity to thank volunteers who lend their time, talent and support to causes they care about in their community. Their actions and stories inspire others to volunteer. The National Points of Light Foundation proclaimed this year’s theme for the week as Service Unites in hopes of capturing the power of individuals who come together to build stronger communities through service.

Literacy programs throughout the state rely on the generosity of individuals to donate their time and talents to adult learners. According to the Independent Sector, volunteer service equates to $25.95 per hour in Illinois. In 2017, volunteer tutors provided more than $3.8 million worth of service hours to the Secretary of State Adult Volunteer Literacy Grant programs.

National Volunteer Week was established in 1974 and has grown each year, with thousands of volunteer projects and special events scheduled throughout the week. Be sure to celebrate and recognize the service of your program’s volunteers.

For additional information on volunteerism at an Illinois literacy program or to refer potential adult learners, please call the Illinois Adult Learning Hotline at 800-321-9511 or visit: www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/hotline.html.
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A mother and daughter spend time reading and playing together during FRN activities at YWCA Elgin.

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