

2013 Summer Reading Program Final Report

October 2, 2013

The Charge:

The Summer Reading Program planning and organization is charged to the Programming Team. The Team was asked by Administration to streamline the SRP and make the Summer Reading Program more user-friendly for customers and staff.

Summary of SRP 2013:

Spearheading the 2013 SRP at Poudre River Public Library District was the SRP workgroup under the general direction of the Programming Team. The group was encouraged to “think outside the box” and design a program more customer-friendly for public and staff. In planning this SRP, the workgroup considered customer and staff feedback from SRP 2012, registration procedures and logistics practices, requirements to earn prizes, events that were offered, and Readers to the Rescue. Recommendations for changes were then presented to and approved by Administration in December 2012.

The overall SRP theme was “Groundbreaking Summer” with the specific titles of “Dig into Reading” for kids, “Beneath the Surface” for teens, and “Groundbreaking Reads” for adults. Participants either read for ten hours (or were read to) or did ten literacy activities and then reported their completion of the requirements during a return visit to the library.

The SRPs were designed to attract children, teens, and adults to our local libraries by offering fun prizes, weekly drawings, and the opportunity to read to help the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers in their efforts in restoring the High Park Fire burn areas - all incentives to participate in the program. Several regular and special events were also scheduled during the course of the program to attract customers into the libraries, many of which included door prize giveaways as an added bonus. By attending events, our customers are exposed to the many books and resources offered by our libraries with the hope that they’ll read even more during the summer. Additionally, for children and teens, summer is an especially key time to read with the hopeful end result that they’ll maintain or improve their reading abilities from one grade level to the next.

To simplify the program for both customers and staff, significant changes were implemented this summer. At the outset the program began after the public schools ended to more clearly define it as a summer season reading program. Secondly, customers picked up a reading log based on their “stage” rather than “age.” This allowed customers to choose which program best suited them. For example, a young tween customer could choose between the Kids and the Teen program. In addition, no registration was required when customers picked up their reading logs. And for the first time, the reading logs included text in both English and Spanish. Finally, the Readers to the Rescue portion of the program was offered to customers of all ages rather than limited to kids and teens only as it has been in the past.

The 2013 SRP continued to partner with local businesses and organizations as in the past. Prominent sponsors of the SRP included TCBY which donated free yogurt to all kids and teens who completed the program. TCBY also donated yogurt cups to the Library Pals’ Party held at the end of summer, and Chipotle donated the food for the party. In addition, Gulley Greenhouse donated free plant coupons to kids and teens who read for the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, the Readers to the Rescue project.

Many additional local businesses donated coupons and gift cards toward the weekly prize drawings held throughout the summer. For a complete list of SRP partners, see the Appendix.

The focus of the program in 2013 was to have participants complete the program rather than just register. It's worth noting that the number of overall participants is still significant though as every distributed reading log represents a customer potentially reading in addition to the library's name out in the greater community.

Just over 12,000 (See Appendix, Table 1) reading logs were distributed in 2013 which is approximately 8% of the total Fort Collins' population (based on U.S. Census data from 2010). Nearly 4,000 (33%) of the reading program participants completed the program requirements. For the school-age population between the ages of 5-14, approximately 16% completed the program (see Appendix, Table 2). Historically participants have only needed five hours rather than ten hours of reading to complete the program. This level of participation and more aggressive requirements are supported in the article *Evaluating Summer Reading Programs: Suggested Improvements* (May 2013) ¹ by Joe Matthews.

Behind the Scenes

All the materials including calendars, reading logs, web pages, and advertising were created in a joint effort of the Communications Office, Systems Administration, the Summer Reading Program workgroup and Programming Team. The artwork for the children's program was created by the nationally known children's illustrator and designer Scott Nash who was also our Artist-in-Residence this summer.

Summary of Findings and Insights for the Future

- Overall the take-home portion of the Summer Reading Program was well received by customers and staff. Customers were especially pleased that registration was no longer needed at the start of the program. For customers, simply coming in to pick up a reading log and then start reading was easy. For staff, the lengthy explanations of how to do the program decreased significantly since the description to customers could literally be as simple as "pick up a reading log and begin reading."
- Administration requested more information (including birthdate) be collected from SRP participants this year than in previous years. Collecting more data allows Administration to compare it to the cluster data collected in recent years by Orange Boy, a partner marketing company. Children's and teens' school information was also collected so the library can share generally with schools the participation levels of their students in the SRP. Data was collected at the SRP tables at each site by staff and volunteers rather than input by customers. Collecting more data made the process lengthier than in recent years, though it did allow for more interaction between customers and staff or volunteers. Occasionally the longer process became cumbersome and therefore will be discussed and re-evaluated for SRP 2014. Reinstating the process of customers entering their own data or perhaps even discontinuing any form of registration at all will also be considered.
- Attendance at this year's SRP events increased over 2012 (see Appendix, Table 3), potentially reaching more in our community. It's unclear, however, if those participating are already active library users or not. If our goal is to increase the use at the library by those who don't typically use the library throughout the year, it would be worth investigating ways to target this audience.

- Prizes continue to be a large draw for participation in the program, particularly by kids and teens. Some adults, however, have also indicated that prizes motivate them as well. With that in mind, the Programming Team is committed to examining and evaluating the current prize structure for its cost-effectiveness, customer friendliness, and overall contribution to a successful SRP.

VOLUNTEERS

Community volunteers helped at the SRP tables which were set up at each library. These volunteers contributed thousands of hours to the 2013 SRP [Actual numbers were not available at the time of this report.] These volunteers assisted customers in the prize pickup process. Seventy-three Library, Puppet, and Story Theatre Pals, young people who have finished fifth through eleventh grade, also contributed over 990 hours to the SRP. These kids assisted at programs, read to children, worked with children on craft projects, made mascot appearances, performed puppet shows and short plays, and participated in other assorted duties.

SRP PROGRAMS/EVENTS (June-July)

A wide range of events for all ages are a hallmark of the District's Summer Reading Program each year. Some highlights included the Artist-in-Residence events, increased program opportunities for school-age kids, movie nights for all ages, evening program for all ages, and puppetry, just to name a few. The return of the Front Range Family Theatre Project of Front Range Community College, which the Library District supports, was also welcomed back and well-received by our customers. The overall quantity of programs offered this year increased as well as the attendance (see Appendix, Table 3). Children's and teen programs were especially well-attended. It will be worth investigating how we might better reach adults in particular for SRP 2014.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE SCOTT NASH

This summer brought Scott Nash, the illustrator of the national children's collaborative summer program "Dig into Reading," to our Library District as our second "Artist-in-Residence." Scott brought his enthusiasm for design, graphics, illustration, and "ridiculous" ideas to eager audiences in early June. Scott presented nine workshops for kids from age 5 and up, teens, and adults, including the Imaginantes Outreach program. Customers and staff alike were highly impressed with Scott's presentations. One family with kids attended every event appropriate for them!

READERS TO THE RESCUE

For the first time in the history of Readers to the Rescue, SRP participants of all ages were encouraged to read for the project. This year's readers read for the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers to aid in their efforts of restoring the High Park Fire burn area. Together readers in the kids', teen, and adult programs read 18,932 hours. Funded through our Poudre River Friends of the Library Summer Reading Program budget, the Library District presented \$3,000 to the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers. The public presentation of the check was held in conjunction with the photo contest awards reception held on September 6, 2013, at Old Town Library.

As an added bonus this year, Gulley Greenhouse offered coupons for free 3" plants to all kids and teens who read at least five hours for the Readers to the Rescue project. It was a tangible way to thank these young people for helping to reforest the burn area and offered them a chance to add a bit of greenery to their corner of the world as well.

PHOTO CONTEST

The Library District invited amateur photographers of all ages to enter our 2nd Annual Photo Contest. This year's theme was "From Underneath," and we were looking for photos that captured the perspective of looking up at the world around us. This year 241 entries were received (up from 117 entries in 2012) and an evening reception was held in September at Old Town Library to announce the winners in the three categories, ages 0-12; ages 13-17; ages 18+. The Fort Collins Digital Camera Club judged the contest. Winning entries are also tagged on the District's Flickr site and accessible through the District web page.

GOALS FOR 2014

- Simplify online form to shorten the logistics of the prize pickup process for customers and staff or discontinue "registration" altogether.
- Increase participation from 2013 and set aggressive participation goals (*consider at least 10% of the school age community*)
- Create a short survey questionnaire for participants and their parents or caregivers.

Developing a better understanding of the reasons why children drop out of the SRP would allow a library to design a program that is more compelling and keep the attention (and participation) of children during the summer.

- Expand outreach efforts by more innovative and effective marketing. For example, the Torrance (Calif.) Public Library placed stickers on the elementary school report cards going home to parents. The stickers exclaimed: "Vacation reading equals better grades. Take your child to the public library for summer reading." As a result of the stickers, the number of children registering for the SRP jumped more than 25 percent.¹
- Research other ways to partner the program with the school district.
- Research an online system using virtual "badges" for incentives.
- Align all programs with current strategic plan.
- Discuss and evaluate customer and staff comments and implement changes that will potentially increase the program's success.

Appendix

2013 Output Measures

Table 1: Take-Home Program

Registration data is not available for SRP 2013. The closest comparison available is the number of SRP reading logs distributed to our customers with the number of customers registered in 2012.

	Number of Reading Logs Distributed in 2013	Number Completed in 2013*	Number Registered in 2012	Number Completed** in 2012
Kids' & Baby/Toddler SRP	6323	2817 (45%)	7285	3289 (45%)
Teen SRP	2259	616 (27%)	1244	494 (40%)
Adult SRP	3456	554 (16%)	2210	611 (28%)

*Completed=read 10 hours

**Completed=read 5 hours

Table 2:

**United States Census Bureau - American fact Finder
Fort Collins, Colorado**

Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010

2010 Demographic Profile Data				
AGE	NUMBER	PERCENT of Total Population	SRP 2013 Number Completed	SRP 2013 Percent of Total Population Completed
Total population	143,986	100	3987	3%
Under 5 years	8,251	5.7	561	7%
5 to 9 years	8,097	5.6	1572	19%
10 to 14 years (through Grade 9)	7,645	5.3	969	13%
15 to 19 years (Grades 10-12)	13,073	9.1	82	1%
20+ years	106920	74.2	2208	2%

Table 3: Programs/Events

	Number of Programs 2013	Number of Programs 2012	Program Attendance 2013	Program Attendance 2012
Kids' SRP	186	125 *(a)	8812	7684
Teen SRP	30	16	634	274
Adult SRP	73	23 *(b)	1454	2486

- *The 2013 program totals include all summer on-site and outreach programs combined. The Outreach programs were reported separately in 2012.*
- *The programs intended for intergenerational audiences are included in the Adult SRP total.*
- *The quantity of school-age programs (grades K-5) were doubled this summer compared to 2012 as part of the Library's current Strategic Plan.*
- *Front Range Family Theatre Project returned to SRP programming after an absence the past few years. This partnered program typically attracts combined audiences of 1,000-2,000.*

*(a) The net number of kids' programs held was 125. Of the original 139 kids' programs advertised, several outreach storytimes were cancelled due to the High Park Fire as well as some on-site programs due to poor weather conditions.

*(b) Adult, OTL Grand Opening, and intergenerational programs are included in this total.

Local Sponsors

- Ace Hardware
- Chipotle
- Chipper's Lanes
- City of Fort Collins Parks
- City of Fort Collins Natural Resources
- Community volunteers
- The Forks
- Fort Collins Digital Camera Club
- Fort Fun
- Front Range Community College
- Gulley Greenhouse
- The Human Bean
- Larimer Animal People Partnership
- Library Pal volunteers
- Poudre River Friends of the Library
- Puppet Pal volunteers
- Qdoba
- Story Theatre Volunteers
- Stove Prairie Elementary – Poudre School District
- Stove Prairie Ranch
- TCBY
- Timnath Presbyterian Church

Public and Staff Comments Received:

"Love the program so happy not to have to pre-register. Thanks Poudre Libraries!!!" – *Teen Customer*

"I really like the streamlining of registration—registering only when the prize is claimed. Brilliant!" – *Staff*

"I love the summer library program. I loved my book and TCBY and plant from Gulleys!" – *Child Customer*

"Library Pals did an awesome job! My children (3, 5, & 7) were so entertained. I was so impressed. Their voices, the music, their projection, and acting were all so fabulous. Very impressed by the quality of the production!" –*Parent*

"Visiting from the East Coast hoping to move our young family here. Loved the puppet show! Thanks!" – *Parent*

Programming Team November 2012 – current

Paula Watson-Lakamp (Co-facilitator)

Jennifer Zachman (Co-facilitator)

Melissa Beavers

Nicole Burchfield

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SRP Workgroup for 2013

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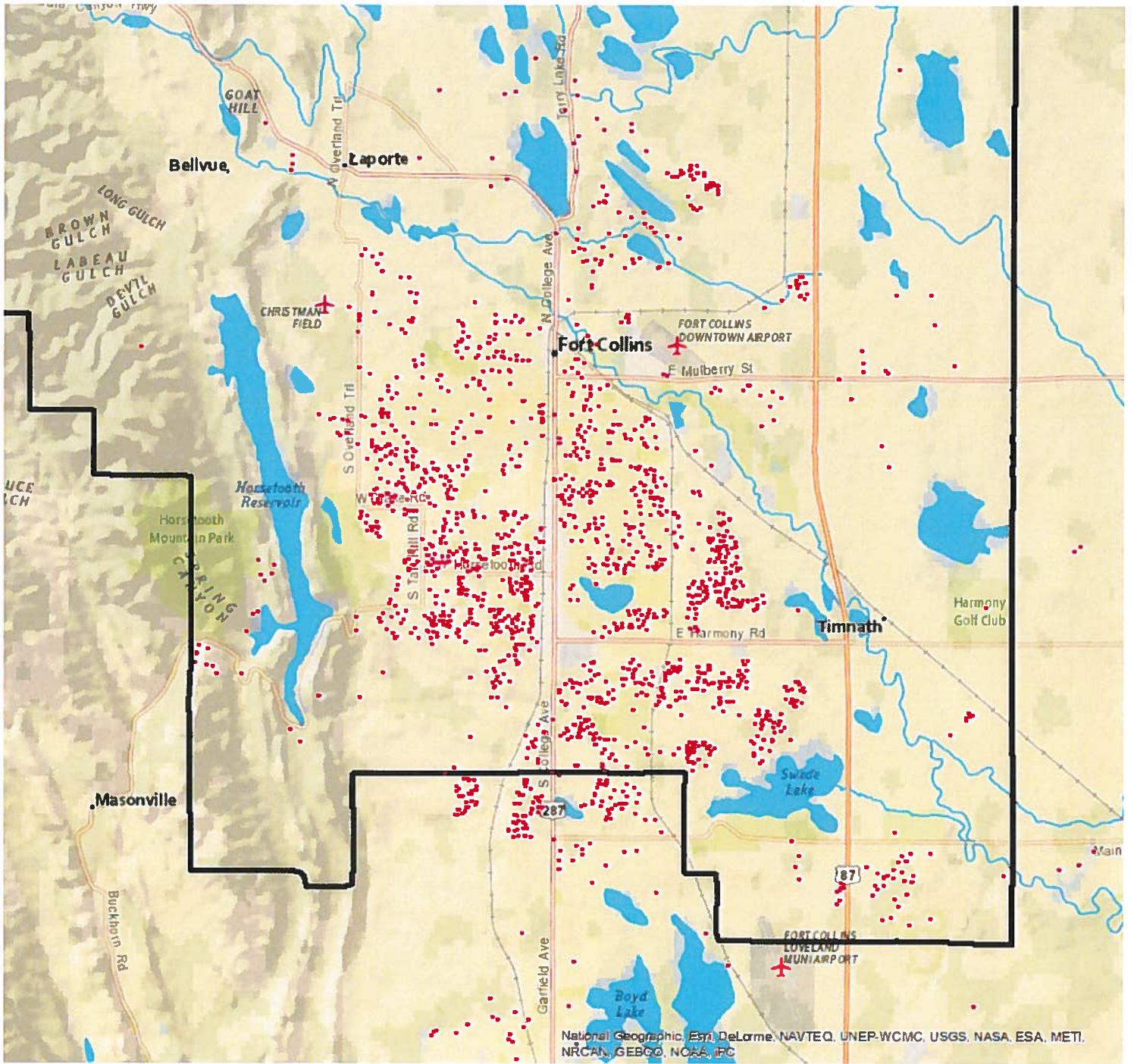
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Reference

- 1) Matthews, Joe. "Evaluating Summer Reading Programs: Suggested Improvements." *Public Libraries Online*. Public Library Association, 10 May 2013. Web. Aug. 2013.



Summer Reading Program Participation
Map - 2013

