

Memo

**To:** Montana State Library Network Advisory Council

**From:** Sara Groves, Communications/Marketing Coordinator

**Date:** November 12, 2013

**Re:** Early Literacy and Summer Reading

We offered a number of early literacy trainings at the Montana Library Association last April. Most of them were conducted panel-style so that librarians could see how different-sized libraries were incorporating the Ready 2 Read program and making it their own. Featured libraries included the Bitterroot Public Library, Darby Public Library, the Dorothy Asbjornson Public Library in Winifred, the Missoula Public Library, the Bozeman Public Library, Flathead County Public Library, and the Sidney/Richland County Public Library. Session topics covered the gamut including how to offer early literacy trainings in your community; developing community partnerships that work for you; making books and babies work in your community; and an overview of Every Child Ready to Read.

Because the Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) hosted their summer reading conference at the same time as the Montana Library Association conference and we wanted our CSLP representative to attend MLA, we selected a different librarian to attend the CSLP conference. Donna Worth of the Whitehall Library attended the CSLP conference in Georgia. She brought back many good ideas to incorporate into summer reading programs and offered a webinar, with Cindy Christin, for librarians to learn about summer reading and how to make the program a success in their library. A new summer reading web site will debut in 2013.

Librarians who attended the Ready 2 Read Rendezvous in 2012 had to complete year-long projects that were based on something that they learned while attending the Ready 2 Read Rendezvous. Many libraries refurbished their children's area based on what they learned during a session on space utilization and planning. Other libraries formed new partnerships in their communities and started conducting early literacy outreach training. I have copied a few of the project summaries for your information.

Shortly after the 2013 legislative session ended, I contacted Lisa Bullock and Janet Walsh to discuss the Ready 2 Read program. I was invited to the Governor's residence to present to them. Also in attendance was Siri Smillie from the Governor's office. I provided an overview of the Ready 2 Read program, including our accomplishments, partnerships, opportunities, and challenges. Mrs. Bullock and Mrs. Walsh agreed to attend an event at the Lewis & Clark Library during the Week of the Young Child. Additionally, Governor and Mrs. Bullock dedicated \$5,000 of the remaining funds from the inaugural balls to the Ready 2 Read Project, which will be used to pay for a portion of the Ready 2 Read Rendezvous.

I also presented to the Governor's office information on the Ready 2 Read program and why libraries are an important part of the early childhood picture. Jennie Stapp attended with me. From the Governor's office, the following people were in attendance:

- Siri Smillie, Associate Policy Advisor
- Jim Molloy, Senior Policy Advisor, and
- Shannon O'Brien, Education Policy Advisor.

This was a great opportunity for MSL to address the Governor's office about the value of public libraries in informal education settings and how we have a very valuable part to play in the future of early childhood learning in Montana.

I also had the opportunity to present to the Education and Local Government (ELG) interim legislative committee. I highlighted the Ready 2 Read program, giving its history, its benefits, and our goals. Additionally, I highlighted the many ways that libraries contribute significantly to helping in the early childhood community in Montana. Cindy Christin, of the Bozeman Public Library, also submitted testimony.

The Montana State Library was also asked to be a partner on Montana's Early Learning Challenge Grant, along with the Governor's office, the Office of Public Instruction, the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Commissioner of Higher Education. This grant will potentially bring \$37.5 million to Montana to address needs in early childhood development and education. The State Library's portion would cover part of an early literacy position at MSL. As far as I can tell, the Montana State Library is the only library in the country to be recognized as a funded partner in this grant. The grant will be awarded mid-December 2013.

We also planned a great Ready 2 Read Rendezvous conference. We had received funding from the NAC to pay for a portion of the Rendezvous. Additional funding was received from Governor Steve and Lisa Bullock and the First Interstate BancSystem Foundation.

We had lined up Saroj Ghoting, who is one of the nation's leading early literacy experts and one of the main developers of the American Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read program (on which MSL's Ready 2 Read program is based), to come and give a day-long session on multi-age storytimes and incorporating the ECRR messaging into storytimes for parents to hear. We had also lined up speakers who were going to focus on block play and another speaker who was going to focus on getting librarians out into the community to partner with various organizations who are involved in early childhood development.

We had a record number of applicants. Over 50 individuals representing 40 different libraries planned to attend the Ready 2 Read conference, including representatives from each of Montana's tribes (a first). I received word that representatives from OPI, DPHHS, and the Governor's office would also attend.

However, four days before the conference was to begin, we had to cancel the Rendezvous because of the government shutdown. Some cancellation fees were incurred, cutting into our budget for a rescheduled Rendezvous, leaving me unsure if we should try to reschedule or just let it go for a year. However, after conducting a survey of libraries and other representatives who had planned to attend the October 2013 Rendezvous, 95% of survey respondents wanted the Rendezvous rescheduled. It also made me aware of just how important it is to the most rural libraries to pay for hotel and travel costs

since nearly 40% of respondents said the Rendezvous was the only training they could afford to attend all year. I think this is especially important because our state's most rural libraries are often the only place that is serving families with young children in their communities.

Therefore, the Rendezvous has been rescheduled for April 25 – 27, 2014 in Bozeman, MT. Saroj Ghoting is on board and I hope that we will be able to bring everyone (or nearly everyone) that had planned to attend in October.