Room to Grow: Building an Environment that Encourages Teen Learning
Pueblo City-County Library District, Rawlings Branch
FY06-07

Project Purpose:
The Rawlings Library, main library of the Pueblo City-County Library District, believes teens in Pueblo County have long been underserved. The library staff and Teen Advisory Board believe that creating a Teen Center can provide resources and programs that encourage teens to see the value of education. Including a high-tech appeal and adding a touch of outreach will draw teens to a place where they will find the resources that support their recreational, educational, and life skills needs. Pueblo County has a large Hispanic/Latino population (39%) with many of its residents being migrant families. 16.3% of the total population and 19.7% of the population under the age of 18 are living under the poverty line. According to the most recent national census, the median household income in Pueblo County is $35,693, well below Colorado’s average of $50,105. A low graduation rate has impact on employment and income in Pueblo. Only 11% of job vacancies are open to Coloradans in the Pueblo area who have no high school or GED diploma, while 66% of job vacancies are open to Coloradans in the Pueblo area who do. Over half of the high school students in Pueblo County do not graduate from high school. The reasons for this may be the increase in gang activity with most of the 500 active members being between the ages of 16 and 24. Also, 327 babies were born to teen mothers in Pueblo County during 2004 and only 32% of these mothers earned their high school diploma. The teen center will contain a variety of resources for teens in these situations common in Pueblo and provide programs to push an awareness of the materials out to the community.

Project Activities:
- Library staff ordered needed materials and equipment and implemented the Teen Central design with a grand opening date of January 20th, 2007. LSTA funds supplied a printer, two video editing and six audio editing workstations that also supported word processing and database research functions. Tables and chairs to support the new workstations were also included.
- Teen Advisory Board members helped to relocate the collection to Teen Central.
- Two part-time teen clerks were hired with LSTA funds (Oct. 2006 ~ May 2007) to assist staff in providing service to and the monitoring of Teen Central.
- Two teen interns provided by Rocky Mountain SER of Workforce received training and monitored the Teen Central desk from March ~ August 2007.
- Two teen interns provided by the Pueblo Community College Upward Bound program received training and monitored the Teen Central desk from June ~ July 2007.
- Four Teen Advisory Board members received training and continue to monitor the Teen Central desk on a voluntary basis.
- The Teen Services Librarian facilitated discussion with and surveyed teen users to evaluate experiences using Teen Central.
- Interim reports for the LSTA grant project, “Room to Grow: Building an Environment That Encourages Teen Learning,” were submitted by each deadline.
- To improve student searches for information, staff provided multiple training sessions on the use of electronic educational databases as well as print reference resources both in-house and during school visits.
- A Podcast Academy providing instruction on use of the podcast-related software available in Teen Central was offered on March 6th.
- Area art teachers were invited to display the work of teens with a monthly rotation beginning in January, 2007.
- Public School District 60 has implemented two programs that offer online coursework. Software for these programs has been installed on the eight computer workstations in Teen Central and students have been trained to use it.
• Public School District 60 Middle School Media Specialists held a meeting in Teen Central on April 4th in order to discuss possible collaborations in the future.
• Public School District 60’s Heaton Middle School held two research nights in Teen Central, inviting students and their parents to learn to research together.
• The Jr. Latino Chamber of Commerce occupied Teen Central each weekday through June to teach ten freshman students how to write their own business plan.
• Each Boy’s and Girl’s Club location visited Teen Central for a special Career Tour, discussing the many occupations within a library. These tours happened on July 16th, 17th, and 23rd.
• Innovative monthly programs designed to encourage library participation among teens such as live concerts and break dancing demonstrations draw an average of 24 participants, with popular programs bringing as many as 120.
• Implementation of a summer-long fine reduction program titled Smart-Off Your Fines. Over $500 in overdue fines were forgiven, reinstating over 100 teen library accounts to a functional status.

Project Outputs:
The measurable project outputs reveal a much more dramatic improvement than we expected to see within the first six months of the implementation of Teen Central. We attribute these increases to two factors, the relocation of YA materials to a place designed for teens and the renewed focus on both teen programming and collection development of teen materials.

• Circulation of YA materials within the Rawlings Library January 1 – August 31, 2006 totaled 7,701 items, while January 1 – August 31, 2007 totaled 16,530 item circulated. This is an increase of 115%.
• At the start of this project in September, 2006, the number of YA items held by the District was 10,734. As of September, 2007, a total of 13,611 YA items are held by the District, an increase of 27%.
• Teen program participation within the District January 1 - August 31, 2006 totaled 941 teen participants at 71 programs, while January 1 – August 31, 2007 totaled 1,878 teen participants at 103 programs. This is an increase of 99%.
• Of the 445 teens that participated in the summer reading program, 291 or 65% of these finished the entire program requiring 32 hours of reading. This is the highest teen completion rate we have recorded.

Project Outcomes:

• More teens have become regular and knowledgeable library users:
  o Indicator 1. 72% of the teens surveyed claimed that as a result of Teen Central, they would visit the library more than they currently do, while 27% claimed they would visit the library the same amount.
  o Indicator 2. There was a 99% increase in overall program participation after the implementation of Teen Central.
  o Indicator 3. There was a 115% increase in circulation of YA materials in the Rawlings Library after the implementation of Teen Central.
• Teens increasingly perceive that the Library’s resources and services assist them in their school assignments and lifelong learning.
  o Indicator 1. In cooperation with Public School District 60, students are able to complete course credits via an online program accessible from computers in Teen Central.
  o Indicator 2. Research nights have been established to teach classrooms of students how to research information for a specific assignment.
• Teens have gained knowledge about librarianship as a career.
  o Indicator 1. Ten teens were trained and mentored by staff to assist and monitor Teen Central. Six of these teens were paid for their work with external funds.
  o Indicator 2. Teen Advisory Board members and other teen volunteers provided over 400 hours of volunteer service to the library.
  o Indicator 3. A specialized tour of the library focusing on the different career options available has been created and given to over 100 youth.
Teen Central is perceived as a place that supports the growth and development of teens.

- Indicator 1. After the implementation of Teen Central, unforeseen partnerships have been forming such as the Jr. Latino Chamber of Commerce’s Zap the Gap program, Public School District 60’s NovaNet program, and the Pueblo City-County Health Department’s Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention program.

Other Results:
The library’s very active Teen Advisory Board includes 30 members who meet regularly to plan teen programs and offer input on all teen decisions. Members are of all ages and played an integral part in the planning and showcasing of the Teen Center. Collaborative work with two local high schools led to the purchase of computers and software that allow students to edit audio and video. Teens from the high schools have video projects to work on for home work plus this is something they like to do! Therefore the computers have large monitors and editing software and tutorial programs to help learn how to use all of it. The library’s new computers will be the backbone of the Teen Center’s Homework-Help Program. In Collaboration with Rocky Mountain SER, a non-profit that provides employment and training to Colorado’s underserved populations, two local teens will be paid to monitor Teen Central’s service desk after the grant funding period. In Collaboration with Pueblo County School District #60’s online diploma program (Ridge Program) enrolled students will be able to complete online courses on the Teen Center computers. This past summer the Latino Chamber of Commerce hosted a 4 week “Zap the Gap” program for 10 students in the 8th – 12th grades. In collaboration with the Rawlings Public Library, Pueblo City Schools, and Century 21 these teens focused on entrepreneurship and learning how to write a business plan. The teens were evaluated on their punctuality, quality of work, work initiative, and quantity of work. At the end of the four weeks each teen received a pay check (thanks to a grant from Century 21) for the work they did with wages dependent on where they had worked. The Rawlings Library provided the Teen Center computers for the teens to do their research and word processing on. The group worked in Teen Central every day for one month completing their business plans. This project was well publicized in Pueblo’s main newspaper.

Anecdotal Info:
The new location of YA materials has generated interest in a new audience. Adults are now much more apt to find and check out these materials. After a recent Teen Advisory Board meeting, I walked into the café area of the library to find puzzled parents. They could not find their teenagers children in their usual meeting place. We all walked up to the new Teen Central area to find all seats taken. The new furniture has really made this area come alive. Teens are now congregating in the library rather than in the café. Teens are excited to be part of the planning process. They are vocal about their feedback both in person as well as in the comment box. Utilizing the Teen Advisory Board to make some decisions has given the teens some ownership in their space. Displaying teen art exhibits from different schools has been a cost effective and fun way to give Teen Central a constantly changing look that reflects the interests of area teens. This element has created a lot of buzz.

Budget:
LSTA funding: $20,910