

**Division of Library and Information Services
Florida Department of State
Library Services and Technology Act
Exemplary Project Recognition Program**

The Division of Library and Information Services selects exemplary projects from among the many outstanding programs funded by the Library Services and Technology Act during the previous year. The Exemplary Project Recognition Program is designed to highlight excellence in program planning, implementation, and evaluation, with special emphasis on outcome measurement.

To be selected for the program, a project must be LSTA-funded and must fall into one of the following categories:

- Effective use of technology to enhance connectivity among libraries and/or the promotion of resource sharing; or
- Innovation in targeting services to people who have difficulty using a library, including children in poverty, and to urban and rural communities.

The program also provides the Division of Library and Information Services with information about projects that can be shared with libraries throughout the state and with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, while providing recognition of excellence in program planning and outcome-based evaluation, and encouraging the replication of high quality projects by other libraries.

This year, the Division has chosen two projects from the 2010 grants cycle:

- West Palm Beach Public Library's Career Catalyst; and
- Sarasota County Library System's Strategically Strengthening the System.

West Palm Beach Public Library's "Career Catalyst" project is a successful partnership between the library and Workforce Alliance, a non-profit organization that offers innovative employment-related services for job seekers and employers. Together, they provided job seekers with librarians who were trained to more efficiently help them, classes designed with their needs in mind, workshops that focused on managing life between jobs, balancing personal budgets and handling stress, in-depth one-on-one assistance to job seekers on resume writing, job searching and other job related issues; and workshops that focused on interview skills, resume writing and even helping jobseekers to discover their "hidden" strengths. The West Palm Beach Public Library also worked with the West Palm Beach City Human Resources Department to provide feedback on resumes and interviewing skills.

During the course of the project, attendees at the workshops, labs and classes commented again and again that they received more computer access, personalized help and information at the West Palm Beach Public Library than they were able to get at the Workforce Alliance offices. The attendees at the library programs said that the help and information they received in the labs and the workshops had made a lasting impression and impact on their lives.

The Sarasota County Library System's "Strategically Strengthening the System" project focused on increasing the access to library services for children, teenagers and families. The librarians of the Sarasota County Library System are completely committed to providing high quality customer service for the patrons and children who visit their sites throughout Sarasota County.

Strong community partnerships created the opportunity for staff training in emergent literacy and child development. This helped them to integrate age appropriate activities into the library environment, creating programs and even a booklet for their Born to Read program.

During the course of the project, the Sarasota County Library System implemented innovative techniques to put books into the hands of potential readers. Beyond continuing and expanding their "deposit" collections housed at preschools, daycares and after-school program sites, the Sarasota County Library System implemented a "Read it, Pass it on" campaign of placing books on the Sarasota County Area Transit buses. These books could be returned to a box on the bus, or passed on to another reader. As part of their "One Book One Community Sarasota" initiative, the Sarasota County Library System started a "Steal this Book" campaign, which placed copies of "The Book Thief" by Marcus Zusak in local businesses. A large sticker on the front invited people to "steal" the book and read it, and then pass it on.

The project engaged every library branch and involved each youth services staff member, utilizing their skills, talents and experiences. The result is a stronger, more efficient and effective library system serving the families and communities of Sarasota County.