

**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 (LSTA) 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.
- 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 three projects from the 2011 grants cycle:

- Gadsden County Public Library System “Engaging Tweens, Teens and Their Community Through Science Exploration”
- Jacksonville Public Library “Expanding Horizons Adult Literacy Project”
- Marion County Public Library System “Ready to Read: Zero to Three”

Gadsden County Public Library System “Engaging Tweens, Teens and Their Community Through Science Exploration”

The Gadsden County Public Library System’s project “Engaging Tweens, Teens and Their Community Through Science Exploration” focuses on reaching tweens and teens. It encourages these groups to use library resources through science exploration. The library used new technology, books and DVDs, science kits, guest speakers who promote science literacy, and volunteers to provide ongoing science-themed programs in schools, outreach locations and libraries.

The staff at the Gadsden County Public Library System targeted the needs and interests of the students in their community. They used a multipronged approach to reach students through schools, science night, science kits, DVDs, and books. The program had twice as many program participants as planned. Both students and adults provided positive comments about the experience. In surveys and comments

participants indicated an increase in interest in science because of the program. The library partnered with the Challenger Learning Center, the Magnet Lab, and other experienced and successful science-oriented museums and organizations. They also partnered with community groups to draw in volunteers and engaged teens by training them as leaders. They established a successful Science Night, and provided a variety of venues to reach participants. "Teens and Tweens" exceeded planned outcomes by making their own short videos of the experiments and posting them to social networking sites. Student volunteers not only learned science, but also learned how to teach science.

Jacksonville Public Library "Expanding Horizons Adult Literacy Project"

The Jacksonville Public Library continued the "Expanding Horizons Adult Literacy Project" for a third year. The project improved the Jacksonville Public Library's capacity to serve an increasing number of adults with limited reading and/or English skills through four program components:

- Distance Learning - Providing lower-level readers access to quality Web-based literacy instruction and increasing learning opportunities without proportionally increasing teaching staff or operating hours.
- Technology - Connecting learners to existing technology so they are able to independently and successfully access educational and employment resources; using technology to communicate with non-English-speaking learners.
- Outreach - Serving learners who have limited or no access to library resources.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Training - Serving greater numbers of library learners through the recruitment, training, and support of volunteer tutors; enhancing local educational opportunities by providing training and technical assistance to individuals and agencies interested in delivering literacy instruction.

The Jacksonville Public Library System's "Expanding Horizons" project is a positive approach to library services that meet patron needs. The library showed a commitment by partnering with various community organizations and businesses to expand the different activities, including Faithbridge Church, San Jose Catholic Church, West Riverside Elementary School and World Relief.

The Center for Adult Literacy at Jacksonville Public Library uses "Fast Track Reading System," a system they developed with previous LSTA grant funding that is available for free to tutors trained in its use. This year, the staff at the Center for Adult Literacy worked with staff from Hillsborough County, who began workshops for Fast Track Reading. Project staff kept careful data; staff and volunteers were trained. The addition of Hillsborough County as the 15th Fast Track Reading System testifies to a program that is successful and well run.

Marion County Public Library System “Ready to Read: Zero to Three”

The Marion County Public Library System began implementing the “Ready to Read: Zero to Three” program in 2010. Building upon current and new collaborative partnerships with community agencies and organizations, the goal for 2011-2012 is to provide multiple points of contact between the public library and at-risk parents/caregivers of children from birth to three years of age.

Program elements and methods include:

- Providing early literacy development information and materials at locations where at-risk parents/caregivers reside or already attend programs. (Early Head Start, teen mother residential facility and Marion County Health Department Healthy Start)
- Establishing relationships with parents/caregivers that support their early literacy development efforts by providing access to opportunities and materials for children in this age group; help parents/caregivers learn how to be their child’s first teachers.
- Encouraging parents/caregivers who may not be traditional library users to feel more comfortable about accessing the public library and its many resources. Building a more comprehensively literacy-rich environment within the public library system for this targeted age group that will include books, materials, programs and equipment.

The project manager and staff at the Marion County Public Library System used their knowledge of best practices to set relevant goals and to reach their target audience. They used a multipronged approach with age-appropriate materials and activities. They changed the lives of the program participants, and demonstrated it through surveys and anecdotal evidence. This project exemplifies their philosophy of “Go Where the Parents Are” in their creative outreach in a variety of venues.