GRANT PROPOSAL:

INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM

FOR THE HIGHTSTOWN LIBRARY

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Executive Summary

The Hightstown Library would like to obtain two grants, totaling $10,000, which will allow us to update our current literacy program that was put in place in 1993. A grant will give us the proper resources to revamp our current literacy program to meet the needs of the community and will allow for the Hightstown Branch to continue carrying on the costs of the program after its first year. There is an increasing population of Hispanic people in the Hightstown community who speak very little to no English. With our grant we hope to increase literacy in adults, especially those who speak English as a second language. We also hope to provide support for our tutors, increase the amount of tutors and students in the program, promote awareness of literacy issues, increase the quality and quantity of learning materials in our collection, increase the number of foreign language materials in our collection and to improve the lives of those who struggle with literacy issues within their family, workplace and community.
Background

The Hightstown Library is one of nine branches within the Mercer County Library System, and is located on a busy street in the heart of a historical town where members of the community passing by are drawn in. Hightstown’s community is made up of a diverse but largely Hispanic population, many of whom speak very little English. Because of this diverse population more than four hundred foreign language books are borrowed through our inter-library loan service each year. An increase in our foreign language materials, in conjunction with our literacy program (with a focus on English as a second language patrons), will hopefully help close the information gap. Along with the language barriers many people in the community face, “Mercer County also has an estimated 60,000 adults who read at a fifth grade level or below. Lacking in these skills can lead to many problems both inside and outside of the home. Research has shown that as literacy levels of parents increase, so does their child’s educational success.” (Literacy Volunteers in Mercer County, Inc.)

The Mercer County Library System currently serves around 90,000 patrons with over 1.2 million visitors to our branches each year. The Hightstown library serves the third largest population of patrons within the system, which are approximately 15,000 patrons. The current literacy program was put in place in 1993 and we are hoping to update our methods and resources as well as increasing the number of tutors we have so we can best serve the needs of all of our patrons that need help. The number of literacy programs provided throughout the Mercer County Library System has increased each year. The most recent increase we have encountered is 2,413 sessions in 2007 to 3,302 sessions in 2009. The Hightstown library alone has increased the number of students who partake in our literacy sessions by about twenty-five students. Three quarters of the students at the Hightstown library, currently receiving help speak English as a second language. There is a large need and request for expanding our literacy
program. We currently have a waitlist of patrons seeking help and also hope to reach out to those patrons who are hesitant to ask for it. We want to advertise our program and make it easy for a patron to create a schedule that is convenient for them.

The Mercer County Library system director Allison Brown will oversee how the literacy program is progressing, but the Hightstown library’s branch manager Jenna Winger will coordinate the program with the help of senior librarian, Sarah Dealy. Ms. Winger and Ms. Dealy will develop an outreach plan for recruiting both students and tutors for the program. Victor Romero who speaks fluently in both English and Spanish, and is a current staff member, will also be volunteering his time and help with the program and advertisement of the program. Other person’s involved will be the generous volunteer tutors we currently use as well as the ones we plan on recruiting.
Statement of Need

At a time when the foreign born population within Mercer County increases the need for more literacy/ESL programs, funding for materials and administrative costs and volunteer efforts has also increased. Since there is a large population of patrons who request foreign language materials, it would be in the best interest of the branch to incorporate more of these types of books into the system. Many of the patron’s seeking support speak very little English and are pursuing help so they may learn English to improve their life by being able to obtain better jobs in the United States, become legal citizens, communicate with children or grandchildren who mostly speak English, or so to have the ability to help their children with school work among many other reasons. “People with English as a second language are among the most likely to lack access to the information that can improve their situations. Most are not even aware of the potential help that is available to them. Libraries, which provide the best access point to information for most citizens, are left untapped by those who most need help to improve their quality of life.” (MacDonald, 2008, p.295)

The Hightstown library was receiving help and volunteers from the Mercer County Community College but the rise in the number of tutoring requests has made it so that they can no longer fund the administrative costs for training and placing tutors and students at our branch. By obtaining a grant we would like to increase the number of literacy sessions we provide by approximately 40-50 more students each year, which would cause us to need approximately 25-30 more tutors per year. We would also like to make sure our tutors are able to get the proper training and teaching materials so that the program runs effectively and efficiently.

We hope that our program will benefit both adults with a low literacy rate as well as those who have difficulty with English by teaching them basic aspects of English, grammar, reading and
comprehension. “Instruction that provides substantial coverage in the key components of reading
identified by the National Reading Panel as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text
comprehension has clear benefits for language-minority students.” (August & Shanahan, 2006, p.9)
Along with these key components, it is also important to teach our students how to use the resources
and materials offered by the library so that in the future they are able to make use of the library on their
own and increase their capacity for academic success. “The development of skills in using the library and
its resources is an essential part of learning English. Non-native English speakers may have an even
greater need for library skills than native speakers...and may need information that native speakers take
for granted. ESL students must be given tools that will enable them to succeed in (their new countries)
education system.” (MacDonald, 2008, p.295) Librarians can teach students to be information literate by
being able to determine their need for information, access and evaluate reliable sources of information,
use the information gathered in a purposeful and ethical way, manage and store the wealth of valid
information and build on that knowledge in a way that makes them lifelong learners. (Stern, 2010, p.70)
Proposed Program/Service Initiative

The literacy program at the Hightstown library will be used to increase literacy in adults (with particular attention on those who speak English as a second language). We hope to provide support for tutors and to increase the number of tutors and students within the program, promote awareness of both the program and the importance of literacy awareness, to increase the quality and quantity of learning materials as well as our foreign language collection, to increase the capacity for employment, job retention or job promotion, enhance basic life skills and to improve the lives of those who struggle with literacy issues within their family, workplace and community.

By obtaining a grant we would like to increase the number of literacy sessions we provide by approximately 40-50 or more students each year, which would cause us to need approximately 25-30 more tutors. Publicity for the literacy program will extend throughout our local schools, the Mercer County Hispanic Association, Better Beginnings of Hightstown and to social services agencies throughout the county. Information on the literacy program, targeted to both students and tutors, will also be publicized within the library itself on flyers and posters as well as on the library’s website.

Sessions will cover grammar, punctuation, phrasal verbs, vocabulary, spelling and use of idioms. They will also get into ways of utilizing the library and the various resources it has to offer. In order to meets the needs of each student, our tutors will use several formats of lessons to find out the best way each individual student learns. “Adults learn best when they know the specific, practical reason or purpose for what they are being asked to learn, can use their previous experiences as a relevant and supportive foundation for their new learning, understand the relevance of the learning to their job, life, family, country or values, are allowed to actively learn using problem based or activity based learning rather than memorization and can use their internal motivation to learn rather than an external teacher
based motivation.” (Stern, 2010, p.73) I think most of the adults that take part in our program will be doing so because they want to better themselves and enhance their daily lives.

The first four months will be spent publicizing the program, recruiting and training tutors, purchasing and cataloging materials, and keeping a log of enrollment. The tutors will receive a twenty-one hour training course held by the Literacy Volunteers in Mercer County, Inc. This training course goes over the definition of literacy, ways in which adults learn, the four language components (reading, writing, speaking and listening), techniques for instruction, lesson plans, materials, activities and resources, as well as assessment and the importance of following up with students. What makes LV-MC unique is its formal training and support services for tutors, which enable tutors to build effective, long-term teaching relationships with their students. (Literacy Volunteers in Mercer County, Inc.) The rest of the year will be spent working in sessions with students, performing continuous evaluations of the program and assessment of the students’ progress. Each session will last 2hrs, one day per week unless extra sessions are requested and available. The length of time the sessions carry on will be determined by an evaluation of each individual student. Some may need more time and assistance than others.

Another aspect we wish to include into our program at least once a year is to have the Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey to come to our library and give a workshop on Financial Literacy. Financial literacy is important for all citizens to know and understand. “The goal of LVNJ’s financial literacy initiative is to give adult students access to the information they need to make good financial decisions. It is designed to provide opportunities for adult literacy students to increase their knowledge of financial topics, such as opening a bank account, using an ATM, and budgeting and saving. Participants in the workshop examine how cultural and personal values affect the way we manage our money, practice activities to use with students, and learn about free resources to support financial literacy education.” (Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey, 2005-2010)
Since each student has their own individual learning techniques that work best for them, it is important to have a variety of materials and resources available. The materials we plan to purchase or create for this program include Adult Basic Reading materials (books, magazines and newspapers), English as a second language materials, foreign language materials, training guides for tutors, folders to keep each individual students work and to keep track of their progress, index cards, notebooks, writing utensils, assessment tools such as evaluation forms, lesson plans, games (mostly word games), instructional videos, dictionaries, computers for printing materials or for use of the internet as a learning tool and posters to advertise the program. After the first year, the Hightstown Branch will assume the costs of continuing the program.

To evaluate how the program is progressing, the project coordinator, Jenna Winger will collect statistics for the duration of the project. The statistics will include the number of tutoring hours, the number of students and tutors and the number of pending requests. Both students and tutors will also be asked to complete an evaluation of the program. The student's evaluation will find out the goals of the individual and survey whether or not they achieved those goals. It will also ask for recommendations on ways the program can be improved. The tutors will receive a similar evaluation asking about how successful they feel the program is and any recommendations they may have for improvement.
Proposed Budget

PROGRAM COSTS

- Branch manager’s salary for preparation, planning and participation in program: Totals about 112 hours for one year at $16.00 per hour. *(Four hours per week for the first four weeks and then two hours per week for the remaining forty-eight weeks)*
  $1,792.00

- Head librarian’s salary for preparation, planning and participation in program: Totals about 56 hours for one year at $12.00 per hour. *(Two hours per week for the first four weeks and then one hour per week for the remaining forty-eight weeks)*
  $ 672.00

- Guides and Assessment Tools for tutors
  $ 800.00

- Adult Basic Reading Materials
  $2,500.00

- English as a Second Language Materials
  $2,400.00

- Foreign Language Books
  $2,300.00

- Travel Fee’s for tutors training
  $ 400.00

- Teaching Aids (games, crosswords, videos)
  $ 525.00

- Misc. supplies including notebooks, folders, index cards, etc...
  $ 900.00

- Advertisement for Program
  $ 175.00

*Total Cost* $12,464.00

PROGRAM FUNDING

- Mercer County Library System’s Hightstown Branch
  $2,464.00

- New Jersey State Library Grant
  $5,000.00

- National Institute for Literacy Grant
  $5,000.00

*Total* $12,464.00
Conclusion

Being that there is such a diverse foreign language speaking population in Mercer County, literacy issues are prevalent and the need for literacy programs is constantly increasing. A grant would allow for us to increase the amount of tutors and sessions we offer which in turn could fulfill our current waitlist of patrons who seek assistance as well as giving us enough resources to reach out to other people in the community who may be in need but unaware of the program. The Hightstown Library will be able to enhance the lives of many people who are at a disadvantage due to their lack of basic literacy skills. We hope that our literacy program will enrich the lives of our students and provide them with the necessary skills needed to utilize the library’s various resources and materials. By understanding how to utilize the library, our students can continue to develop and use the library to improve other parts of their lives having to do with their jobs, family or community. With some help we can improve our foreign language collection of materials to meet the needs of our community and promote our awareness and appreciation of their culture and the importance of reading, no matter what the language.
References


Appendices

- Mercer County Library System’s Annual Report for 2008 & 2009
- Sarah Dealy’s Resume
- Hightstown’s Annual Circulation Report for 2008 & 2009
- Library Budget for 2009